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STEPHEN TO TIMOTHY

BY

ALEXANDER WHYTE, D.D.

AUTHOR OF 'BUNYAN CHARACTERS'
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CONTENTS

		PAGE
XCVII.	STEPHEN,	9
XCVIII.	PHILIP: DEACON AND EVANGELIST,	19
XCIX.	CORNELIUS,	30
C.	EUTYCHUS,	39
CI.	FELIX,	48
CII.	FESTUS,	57
CIII.	KING AGRIPPA,	63
CIV.	LUKE, THE BELOVED PHYSICIAN,	72
CV.	ONESIPHORUS,	79
CVI.	ALEXANDER THE COPPERSMITH,	89
CVII.	PAUL AS A STUDENT,	98
CVIII.	PAUL AS APPREHENDED OF CHRIST JESUS,	110
CIX.	PAUL IN ARABIA,	121
CX.	PAUL'S VISIT TO JERUSALEM TO SEE PETER,	131
CXI.	PAUL AS A PREACHER,	138
CXII.	PAUL AS A PASTOR,	146

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PAGE

CXIII. PAUL AS A CONTROVERSIALIST, . . . 158

CXIV. PAUL AS A MAN OF PRAYER, ... 168

CXV. PAUL AS A BELIEVING MAN, ... 180

CXVI. PAUL AS THE CHIEF OF SINNERS, . . . 190

CXVII. THE THORN IN PAUL'S FLESH, ... 200

CXVIII. PAUL AS SOLD UNDER SIN, ... 210

CXIX. PAUL'S BLAMELESSNESS AS A MINISTER, . . 219

CXX. PAUL AS AN EVANGELICAL MYSTIC, . . . 230

CXXI. PAUL'S GREAT HEAVINESS AND CONTINUAL SORROW OF HEART, ... 241

CXXII. PAUL THE AGED, ... 252

CXXIII. APOLLOS, ... 263

CXXIV. LOIS AND EUNICE, ... 274

CXXV. TIMOTHY AS A CHILD, ... 285

CXXVI. TIMOTHY AS A YOUNG MINISTER, . . . 294

BIBLE CHARACTERS

XCVII

STEPHEN

IN the stoning of Stephen there was lost to the Pentecostal Church another Apostle Paul. Stephen was a young man of such original genius and of such special grace, that there was nothing he might not have attained to had he been allowed to live. His wonderful openness of mind; his perfect freedom from all the prepossessions, prejudices, and superstitions of his day; his courage, his eloquence, his spotless character; with a certain sweet, and at the same time majestic, manner; all combined to set Stephen in the very front rank both of service and of risk. In all these things, and especially in the openness, receptiveness, and ripeness of his mind, Stephen far outstripped even such pillar apostles as Peter and James and John themselves. Stephen had anticipated also, and had forerun, and had all but carried off the apostolic palm from Paul himself. All these things made Stephen already all but the foremost man of his day, and, as a consequence, the first man to be struck at and struck down. Simple deacon

and servant of tables as Stephen was, it was impossible that a man of such ability and such distinction should be confined and limited to that. His intellectual power, his spiritual insight and foresight, with the strength of his faith and the warmth of his devotion, were all such that he soon found himself deep in apostolic duty, as well as in the proper work of the deaconship. After his purely deaconship work was done, and springing immediately out of his way of doing it, Stephen felt himself constrained on many occasions to take a still more public part in the support and the defence and the edification of the infant Church of Jerusalem. But malice always follows eminence in this world, as Stephen soon found out to his cost. Ignorance, superstition, prejudice, ill-will, odium, all began to dog Stephen's footsteps and to raise their murderous misrepresentations against him in every synagogue into which he entered. And the better he spoke, and the more unanswerably, the more were the enemies that he raised both against himself and against the truth, till his enemies had their own way with him. "We have heard him speak blasphemous words against Moses, and against God." That was his indictment, as we say; and then we have his apology in the seventh chapter of the Acts, and a very remarkable piece of speaking it is in many ways.

As often as we hear of an Apology we always think of Socrates. On the other hand, our Lord, when on His trial, offered no Apology. He held His peace, insomuch that the governor marvelled

greatly. What, I reverently wonder, would His Apology have been? You who are students of the New Testament might do worse, now that your college exercises are nearly over, than to continue your great studies and try to construct, with all your learning and ability and insight, the Apology that our Lord, had He seen fit, might have addressed to that same Council. An intelligent congregation would greatly delight in that supposed Apology for a Sabbath evening lecture, if you did it well. At any rate, if your sense of reverence will not let you put His Apology into your Master's mouth, you might do this: you might sometime take the trouble to compare the Apology that Plato puts into his Master's mouth with this Apology of Stephen that you have here in Luke. The one, the first great defence of truth and righteousness in the Pagan Dispensation; and the other, the first great defence of Christ and His infant Church in the Apostolic and Evangelic Dispensation. "Men, brethren, and fathers, hearken!" Stephen commences. Always commence by conciliating your audience, says Dante. In his introduction, says Augustine, Stephen practises the Quintilianian art of capturing the goodwill of his hearers, however stoutly and sternly and plainspokenly he may have to end.

It almost looks as if we had Stephen's Apology verbatim in the Book of the Acts. His speech reads as well to us as if we had sat in the Council that day and had heard it with our own ears. The beloved physician, when he turned Church historian,

had a perfect understanding of all things from the very first; and, among other things, he supplies us with remarkably full reports of some of the great sermons and speeches and apologies of that all-important time. Sometimes a single word, sometimes an accent on a single word, sometimes the shaping and insertion of a single phrase, sometimes a quotation or a paraphrase of a quotation, sometimes what he does not say, as well as what he does say, sometimes what he manages to suggest without saying it at all: little things like these will discover and proclaim the true orator. And that is the case again and again in Stephen's Apology. Pericles, Plutarch tells us, never spoke that he did not leave a secret sting in the hearts of his hearers. And all Stephen's eloquent review of Old Testament history drew on and gathered itself up to drive this terrible sting through and through the hearts of the whole Council, "As your fathers did, so do ye! For ye have now been the betrayers and murderers of the Just One!"

Now, out of all that, quite a crowd of lessons and instructions and examples and warnings rise up before us, and press themselves upon us. Let us select two or three of those lessons, and leave the others for the present unspoken.

1. Up to this time the twelve had done everything with their own hands. They had been evangelists, preachers, apologists, pastors, ruling elders, session-clerks, servants of tables, and everything else, for the daily increasing congregations of Jerusalem and the whole country round about.

But it was the money matters of the Pentecostal Church that completely broke the apostles down, and brought things to a perfect standstill. When thousands of people were contributing to a central sustentation fund, and were again, rich and poor, supported out of it; when the rich were selling their possessions and were laying the prices at the apostles' feet; and when the increasing crowds of poor members were receiving their daily dole directly from the apostles' hands; it is plain that all this would soon result in the serious encroachment of the secular side of their work, so to call it, on the purely spiritual side. Their public teaching and preaching, and certain still more important matters, would be seriously interfered with, till the twelve apostles took the wise step that is recorded in this chapter. It is not reason, they said, and we cannot go on with it, that we should leave the Word of God in order to serve tables to this extent. Wherefore, brethren, look out among yourselves seven men whom we may appoint over this business. And we will, all the more, give ourselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the Word. And this proposal of the apostles commended itself to the common sense of the whole Church, and they chose seven select men and set them before the apostles for ordination. And we inherit the wisdom and the benefit of that apostolic example to this day. The Church of our day also says to her members and to her office-bearers something like this:—'It is utterly unreasonable that our ministers should all alone be expected to perform

all the multitudinous work that arises out of a great congregation. It is quite preposterous that any one man should be expected to preach two or three sermons a week, keep in close contact with a thousand people, baptize our children, marry our sons and daughters, console our sick, bury our dead, find work for our unemployed, negotiate loans of money and gather gifts for our embarrassed members, get our aged and our orphaned into asylums and hospitals, besides many other things that can neither be foreseen nor set aside by our ministers.' And thus it comes about that a compact is entered into and a division of labour is made. The young men take the financing of the congregation off their minister's hands, while the more experienced men share with him in the teaching and the ruling and the visiting of the flock. Never more than just at the present day did the Church see the divine wisdom of the apostolic institution of the deaconship, or feel more the need of adhering to it and extending it. And, then, the minister who honestly performs his part of the compact in prayer and in preaching will not lack, any more than Peter and John lacked, the willing and capable help of Stephen and of Philip. As James Durham says: "In all this we see what a minister's great task is, and wherein he should be taken up—secret prayer, reading, and meditation, and then the public preaching of the Gospel. We see also that though all ministers are virtually both elders and deacons as the twelve were, yet ought they to regulate both of these offices with

respect to the former two of secret prayer and public preaching. As also that elders and deacons ought to have respect to keep ministers from being overburdened and too much toiled, that they may have freedom to follow their main work. Yea, even to have frequent and lengthened access to aloneness and solitariness, which is both most necessary as well as well becoming in a minister." And so on at great depth and fulness in 'The Dying Man's Testimony to the Church of Scotland.'

2. *Nomina debita*, says John Donne; that is to say, 'Every man owes to the world the signification of his name, and of all his name. Every new addition of honour or of office lays a new obligation upon him, and his Christian name above all.' Now, when you name a man a deacon, as the apostles named Stephen, from the day you do so he begins to owe to the world and to the Church some new obligations. He is called and ordained and named because he is a man of honest report, and full of wisdom and devotedness; and all these graces grow in every new deacon as he goes on to exercise them. I do not know so well how it is with other Deacons' Courts, but I know to my continual delight and refreshment how it is with our own. I know how nobly our deacons fulfil the Pentecostal programme. And that is why our name as a congregation stands in such honour among the congregations of the land. It is our deacons who do it. It is the successors of Stephen and Philip who do it. Every penny of our Pentecostal thousands is collected

personally by our deacons. And collected too with a spontaneity and a punctuality and a knowledge of what they are doing, and a love for what they are doing, that make our monthly meetings one of the greatest delights and refreshments of my whole ministerial life. It all depends on our clerk, and on our treasurer, and on our censor, and on our splendid staff; all our ability to serve the tables of our poorer brethren depends absolutely on our deacons. Take away our deacons, or let them stand idle while other people do their work, and we would very soon drop down from the front rank to which they and they alone have raised us. "Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in Mine house, and prove Me now herewith, saith the Lord of Hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it." It is because our Stephen-like staff hear their Master saying that to them every month, that they purchase to themselves such a good degree, and purchase for Free St. George's congregation such a good degree also. Wherefore, all my brethren, look ye out among you men of mind, and men of heart, and men of business habits, and they will purchase a good degree for you also when you appoint them over this business. I only wish that every deacon in Scotland could come and see how our deacons in Edinburgh do their work.

3. And now to pass on to the day when Stephen finished his course, kept the faith, and resigned the deaconship. "Behold!" he exclaimed with the

stones crashing about his head, "I see the Son of Man standing on the right hand of God!" But the Son of Man does not now any more stand, surely. For when He had by Himself purged our sins He surely sat down for ever on the right hand of God. "Sit, said the LORD to my Lord, at My right hand until I make Thy foes Thy footstool." But, with all that, He could not sit still when He saw them stoning Stephen. And so it is with Him always. He sits, or He stands, or He comes down to earth again, just according to our need, and just according to our faith. I see Him standing up, says Stephen. What a power, what a possession, is faith! For faith can make the Son of Man do almost anything she likes. As William Guthrie says of her, "Faith sometimes acts in a very wilful way upon her Lord." So she does. For look at what a wilful way the Syrophœnician woman acted upon her Lord, till, to get rid of her, He said to her, Take anything you like. Only go home to your daughter. And so still. The faith of His people gives Him absolutely no rest. Their faith makes Him stand up long after He has sat down. Their faith makes Him do everything and be everything that they need and ask. He did everything on earth, and He still does everything in heaven, by which He can be useful to poor souls. As for example, Is the soul naked? Then Christ on the spot is fine raiment. Is the soul hungry and thirsty? Immediately Christ is its milk and its wine, its bread of life and its true manna. Is the avenger of blood at the heels of the sinner? Then just one step

and the blood-guilty man is in the city of refuge. In one word, tell Him how He can help a poor sinner who has no other help, and all the high and honourable seats in heaven will not hold our Lord down. And, then, as He honours faith, so faith honours Him. Is He a bridegroom? Faith is in His arms. Is He a shepherd? Faith is at His feet. Is He a rock? Faith has already begun to build her house on Him for eternity. Is He the way? Faith runs with all her affections to the Father by Him. And they stoned Stephen, calling upon God, and saying, Behold, I see the Son of Man standing on the right hand of God. Lord Jesus, receive my spirit. And he kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge. And when he had said this, he fell asleep. For they that have used the office of a deacon well purchase to themselves a good degree, and great boldness in the faith which is in Christ Jesus.

XCVIII

PHILIP: DEACON AND EVANGELIST

'THE more we are mown down by you, the more we multiply among you,' said Tertullian in his proud Apology. 'Every single drop of our blood springs up, in some thirty, in some sixty, and in some an hundred-fold.' And thus it was that the banishment of Philip from Jerusalem was the salvation of Samaria, and thus it was also that the martyrdom of Stephen was the conversion of Saul. *Semen est sanguis Christianorum.*

Stephen was the first martyr, and Philip was the first missionary. The deaconship adorned itself and did nobly in those early days. Stephen and Philip were not apostles to begin with; they were simply deacons. They were not ordained, like the apostles, to prayer and to the ministry of the Word. But you cannot limit, and narrow, and bind down to the serving of tables two powerful and original men like Stephen and Philip. Paul had Stephen and Philip in his mind when he said to Timothy long afterwards, that they who have used the office of a deacon well, purchase to themselves a good degree, and great boldness in the faith which is in Christ

Jesus. All of which both Stephen and Philip had emphatically done.

"And," writes Luke to Theophilus, "at that time there was a great persecution against the Church which was at Jerusalem; so that they were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria. And Philip went down to the city of Samaria, and preached Christ unto them. And there was great joy in that city." Now, just suppose for a moment that you had been Philip. Suppose that you had been scattered abroad like Philip and his colleagues. And suppose that you had escaped with the Gospel in your hands, and were chased into some half-heathen city that had just been touched on the surface with the knowledge of Christ. You would be sure to seek out those who had been so touched, and you would throw yourself on their hospitality and protection. And thus it was that Philip would certainly seek out the woman of Samaria that all the world knows about now, and in whose heart, and in whose house, there was now a well of water springing up unto everlasting life. Peter and John would give Philip an introduction to her; and to reassure him about his reception, they would tell him, John especially, all about that oft-remembered day when their Master must needs go through Samaria, and when, being wearied with His journey, He sat thus on the well. And the woman would welcome Philip, and would say to him, Come in, thou blessed of the Lord, for when I was thirsty He gave me drink. And when Philip said to her, Sit down, woman, sit

down and eat, she only served his table all the more hospitably, and said, I have meat to eat that thou knowest not of. Come to my house, she said also to all her neighbours, and see and hear a man who has come to my house from the very risen Christ Himself. And, taking his text from the woman's words, Philip preached the risen Christ in Sychar till there was great joy in that city. Luke is a scholar, and so is Theophilus. Luke is a student and an artist in his words, and Theophilus attends to what Luke writes. And thus it is that when Luke tells Theophilus that Philip preached 'Christ' to the Samaritans, and then that the same evangelist preached 'Jesus' to the Ethiopian eunuch, it is not for nothing; it is not of no consequence what Luke says, or how he says it. It is not without good reason that such a scrupulous composer as Luke is selects his names and his titles in this exact way for our Lord. Bengel is the very commentator for such a composer as Luke. And Bengel writes with his needle-pointed pen and says that "from the Old Testament point of view, progress is made from the knowledge of Christ to the knowledge of Jesus; while from the New Testament point of view, the progress is made from the knowledge of Jesus to the knowledge of Christ." "Not a single syllable," says Basil, "of all that is written concerning Jesus Christ should be left uninvestigated. The men who trace the hidden meaning of every word and even of every letter in the New Testament are those who understand best the end and nature of our Scriptural calling." Let our

theological students, then, study out the fact of Philip's preaching 'Christ' in the city, and 'Jesus' in the desert, and make an Ellicott-like thesis for themselves and for their people on this subject taking in Romans viii. 11.

Now, I must stop for a moment at this point to say how much I feel both impressed and rebuked by the noble conduct of Peter and John. Both Stephen and Philip were by far the subordinates of Peter and John. And there is no sin that so easily besets some of us ministers as just the sudden success of those who are by far our subordinates. There is nothing that more tries us and brings to the surface what we are made of at heart than just to be outstripped and extinguished by those who but yesterday were mere boys beside us. And it takes the strongest man among us and the holiest man all his might to behave himself with humility and with generosity to his late subordinates at such a time. But let us stop at this point and see how well both Peter and John came out of that furnace of theirs. They did not grudge, nor resent, nor suspect, nor despise the success of Stephen in Jerusalem, nor of Philip in Samaria. They did not say, The deacon has his proper place. They did not complain that he had so soon left the serving of tables. They did not say that Philip should attend to his proper work, and let preaching alone. They did not shake their heads and forecast that it would soon turn out to be all so much Samaritan excitement. They did not have it reported to them every word that Philip had at any time spoken that was out of joint. Far

no. To their great honour be it told, they behaved themselves in all this temptation of theirs in a way altogether worthy of their apostolic office. They did not wait to see if the awakening was real and would last, as we would have done. But the twelve sent down Peter and John, their two best men, to assist Philip to gather in the results of his so suddenly successful mission. And Peter and John set to work with all their might to found a church out of Philip's converts, to be called the Church of the Evangelist, after the name of their deacon and subordinate. I, for one, must lay all that Samaria episode well to heart. I, for one, must not forget it.

Both Stephen and Philip have made this impression also upon me that they were born preachers, as we say. Born, not made. Born, not college-bred. Born, and not simply ordained. And if a man is a born preacher, you may set him to serve tables, or, for that matter, to make tables, but he will preach in spite of you. You may suborn men to bear him down. You may banish him away to Samaria, but I defy you to shut his mouth. Stephen and Philip were born with such a fire in their bones that no man could put it out. There is a divine tongue in their mouth that you cannot silence. The more you persecute them and cast them out, and the more tribulation you pass them through, they will only preach all that the better. Now, that there were two men of such rare genius among the first seven deacons is a remarkable proof of the insight of the congregation that

elected them, as well as of the wealth of all kinds of talent in the Apostolic Church. I have often wished that I could have been one of the two Emmaus-men whose hearts burned within them as their risen Lord expounded unto them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself. And, then, after that I would fain have been the servant of the Ethiopian eunuch, so as to have sat beside him and heard him reading the prophet Esaias till Philip came up and said to him, Understandest thou what thou readest? How can I, except some man should guide me? And he desired Philip that he would come up and sit with him. And Philip opened his mouth, and began at the 53rd of Isaiah, and preached unto him Jesus. All this took place in the primitive, simple, unsophisticated east, and we must not measure any part of all this history by our western habits of intercourse. It would be resented as the height of intrusion and incivility among us if one man were to say to another over his book on the deck of a steamer or in a railway carriage, Are you understanding what you are reading? But look at it in this way. Suppose you sat beside a foreigner who was struggling with one of our English guide-books, and was evidently missing the sense, till he was starting off in a wrong direction; it would be no intrusion or impertinence if you made up to him and said to him something like this: 'I fear our barbarous tongue is not easily mastered by foreign scholars, but it is my native language, and I may be able to be of some use to you in it.' "How can I?" said the

humble-minded eunuch, "except some man should guide me?" Now, we all think, because we know the letters of it, and are familiar with the sounds of it, that we understand the Bible: Isaiah, and John, and Paul. But we never made a more fatal mistake. There is no book in all the world that is so difficult to read, and to understand, and to love, as the Bible. Not having begun to understand it, some of you will turn upon me and will tell me that even a little child can understand it. And you are perfectly right. "A lamb can wade it," said a great Greek expositor of it. But he went on to add that "an elephant can swim in it." And thus it was that, over and above the apostles, all the deacons of intellect and experience were drawn on to expound the Scriptures, first to the learned Council of Jerusalem, then to the sceptical men of Samaria, and then to the Ethiopian neophyte in his royal chariot. And thus it is still that the Church collects into her colleges the very best minds she can lay hold of in all her families, and trains them up under her very best teachers, and then when they are ready says to them, Go join thyself to this and that vacant pulpit, and make the people to understand what they read. And you must often have both felt it and confessed it to be so. How different the most superficially familiar chapter looks to us ever after some great expounder, by tongue or by pen, has opened it up to us! A book of the Bible read in routine chapters in the pulpit or at family worship, how dull, and unmeaning, and immediately forgotten it is!

Whereas, let an interpreter, one of a thousand, open it up to us, and we never forget either the chapter or him. "The Spirit of God maketh the reading, but especially the expounding of the Word, an effectual means of convincing and converting sinners, and of building them up in holiness and comfort, through faith, unto salvation." "It is mainly by the institution of expounding and preaching," says John Foster, "that religion is kept a conspicuous thing, a public acknowledged reality. If we are told that we should rather say that it is public worship that has this effect, we have to answer that public worship, apart from expounding and preaching, has a very small effect in favour of religion. It is quite certain that where the conductors of that worship have not knowledge and religion enough to expound and preach, that worship will be little more than a ceremonial routine of idle forms."

Years and years and years pass on. Philip has for long been a married man, and is now the father of four grown-up daughters. His wife is a good woman. She is a grave woman, as Paul exhorted her to be. And, between them, Philip and his grave and faithful wife both ruled themselves well, and thus their four extraordinarily-gifted daughters. And with such a father and such a mother, I do not wonder that when such things were abroad in those days as gifts of tongues, and gifts of healing, and gifts of prophecy, and many other operations of the Holy Ghost, a double portion of some of those miraculous things came to Philip's four daughters. Luke has a quick eye for everything of that kind,

and thus it is that he interpolates this footnote in his history of Paul. "And the next day we came to Cæsarea, and we entered the house of Philip the evangelist, which was one of the seven; and abode with him. And the same man had four daughters, virgins, which did prophesy. And as we tarried there many days, there came down from Judea a certain prophet, named Agabus. And when he was come to us, he took Paul's girdle, and bound his own hands and feet, and said, Thus saith the Holy Ghost, so shall the Jews at Jerusalem bind the man that owneth this girdle," and so on. And thus it was that this strange Agabus was the last sanctification of Philip and his wife and his four prophetical daughters. To begin with, his own children had been gifted and employed and honoured far above Philip himself. And then Agabus arrived just at the moment to be gifted and employed and honoured far above them all. In the rich grace and manifold wisdom of God, outwardly and ostensibly and on the surface, Agabus's errand was to foretell Paul about his future arrest at Jerusalem. But, far deeper than that, Agabus had a finishing work of the Holy Ghost to perform on Philip, and on his four daughters, and on their mother, that grave woman. A work of humility. A work of resignation. An evangelical work. A work far above the best prophecy. A work of lowly-mindedness. A work of esteeming others better than themselves. A work of saying, Agabus must increase, and I must decrease. And a work that, no doubt, began by reproaches and

rebukes and charging God foolishly, like this. 'Why were not my prophetical daughters employed to deliver this prophecy to Paul? Why was a stranger brought in over our heads in this way? We cannot ever again have the same standing and esteem in Cæsarea after this so open slight. What a strength it would have been to us in our pulpit and pastoral work had my daughters been honoured of the Holy Ghost to utter this prophecy concerning the Apostle. It would have established us and honoured us in our work in Cæsarea like nothing else.' Agabus was an evil enough messenger to Paul; but he was such a staggering blow to Philip and to his whole household that it took all Paul's insight, and skill in souls, and authority with Philip, and power with God, to guide and direct Philip so as that he should get all God's intended good to himself and to all his house out of it.

Now, Agabus does not come to your house and mine in such open and such dramatic ways as he came to Philip's house; but he comes. Agabus of Jerusalem came to Jonathan Edwards's grave and godly wife in Northampton in the shape of a young preacher. "On Monday night, Mr. Edwards being gone that day to Leicester, I heard that Mr. Buell was coming to this town. At that moment I felt the eye of God on my heart to see if I was perfectly resigned with respect to Mr. Buell's expected success among our people. I was sensible what great cause I had to bless God for the use He had made of my husband hitherto, and I thought that if He now employed other ministers more I

could entirely acquiesce in His will. On Tuesday night there seemed to be great tokens of God's presence at Mr. Buell's meeting; and when I heard of it, I sat still in entire willingness that God should bless his labours among us as much as He pleased, even though it were to the refreshing of every saint and the conversion of every sinner in the whole town. These feelings continued afterwards when I saw his great success. I never felt the least rising of heart against him, but my submission to God was even and uniform and without interruption or disturbance. I rejoiced when I saw the honour God had put upon him, and the respect paid to him by the people, and the greater success attending his preaching than had now for some time past attended my husband's preaching. I found rest and rejoicing in it, and the sweet language of my soul continually was, Amen, Lord Jesus. Amen, Lord Jesus. I had an overwhelming sense of the glory of God, and of the happiness of having my own will entirely subdued to His will. I knew that the foretaste of glory I then had in my soul came from God, and that in His time I shall be with Him, and be, as it were, swallowed up in Him." Agabus, and Mr. Buell, and another. But who is that other? And what is his name?

XCIX

CORNELIUS

ORNELIUS had been sent out from Rome to Cæsarea very much as our English officers are sent out to India. The Romans both despised and hated the Jews, as we, with all our proverbial pride, neither despise nor hate any of our subject races; and, sharing both that despite and that hatred, Cornelius had come out to his centurionship in Cæsarea. But Cornelius was no ordinary Roman centurion, and he soon discovered that the Jews of Cæsarea were no ordinary tributary people. The wide and deep contrast between Italy and Israel soon began to make an immense impression on Cornelius's excellent and open mind. Israel's noble doctrine of Jehovah and His Messiah; the spotless purity of Israel's morality, with the sweetness and the sanctity of its home life; its magnificent and incomparable literature, even to a man fresh from Athens and Rome; and its majestic and overpowering worship;—all these things immensely impressed Cornelius, till, by the time we are introduced to him, Cornelius is already a devout man, and one that fears the God of Israel, and prays to the God of Israel always.

It was one of the conspicuous characteristics of Cornelius that all his servants, both domestic and professional, stood on such a friendly footing with their master. His family religion, as we would call it, was one of the most outstanding and attractive things about Cornelius. Long before Cornelius was a baptized man at all, this mind of Christ was already found in the centurion. "I call you not servants," said One whom Cornelius did not yet know. "For the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth; but I have called you friends: for all things that I have learned of my Father I have made known unto you." So did Cornelius. Cornelius was already one of those Christian gentlemen who hold their commissions in the army less for their own sake than for the sake of their soldiers; and their landed estates less for their own sake than for the sake of their farmers, and gardeners, and coachmen, and grooms; and their factories less for their own sake than for the sake of their factory-hands; and their offices less for their own sake than for the sake of their clerks; and their shops less for their own sake than for the sake of their shopmen and their shopwomen; and their houses at home less for their own sake than for the sake of their children, and their domestic servants, and their ever-welcome guests. Of all holy places in the Holy Land, few places, surely, were more the house of God and the gate of heaven in those days than just the Roman castle of Cæsarea, where the centurion of the Italian legion lived in the fear of God with all his household, and with all his devout soldiers, who were

daily learning more and more devoutness from the walk and conversation of their beloved and revered centurion.

Well, one day Cornelius was fasting and praying all that day till three o'clock in the afternoon. It must have been some special and outstanding day in his personal life, or in his family life, or in his life in the army. We are not told what anniversary-day it was; but it was a day he had never forgotten to commemorate in prayer: and he has never forgotten it in alms nor in thanks-offerings since: no, nor ever will. It had just struck three o'clock in the afternoon, when an angel descended and entered the barrack-room where Cornelius was on his knees. For are they not all ministering spirits sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation? "What is it, Lord?" said Cornelius, looking up in holy fear. "Thy prayers and thine alms," said the angel, "are come up for a memorial before God." We have no Bible dictionary on earth that is able to explain to us the language of heaven, and thus we are left to compare Scripture with Scripture in this matter of a memorial. "This shall be told for a memorial of her," said the Master of angels, when the woman poured the alabaster box upon His head. And this remarkable and unique word stands in the text in order that we may exercise some understanding, and imagination, and encouragement, in our alms and in our prayers in our day also. There was joy in heaven—this is part of what a memorial in heaven means—over every good deed that Cornelius did, and over every good

word that Cornelius spake, both to God and to man. They had their eyes upon Cornelius, those angels of God, because he had been pointed out to them as one of the heirs of salvation. And, you may be sure, they did not keep Cornelius's alms and prayers to themselves; but, the holy tale-bearers that they are, they sought out the prophets and the psalmists who had prophesied concerning the salvation of the Gentiles, and told them that the great work had begun at last in the conversion of the Ethiopian eunuch and the Roman centurion. And it was not left to their winged visits up and down with the last news from Cæsarea; but there were great books kept also, and one of them with Cornelius's name embossed on the back of it, with all his prayers, and all his alms, day and date, times and places, opportunities and people, with all their other circumstances and accompaniments. The memorial books are kept with such scrupulous care in heaven, because so much already turns there, and will afterwards turn there, on things that we might quite overlook down here. And those great volumes, kept with such insight and truth, lie open before the throne of God for a memorial, for the instruction of His angels, and for the joy of all the already saved. How it was decreed from all eternity that Cornelius should be a centurion; should be commissioned by Cæsar to Cæsarea; should be an open-minded man; should open his mind to the Old Testament and to the temple; should begin to pray, and should sometimes fast that he might the better pray; and should be always waiting to

see what he ought to do;—all that was written in the book of his memorial concerning Cornelius. And, as time went on, Cornelius's memorial-volume grew till there was written in it how Peter came to him, and how he was baptized, and how he finished his course, and kept the faith, first at Cæsarea, and then at Rome, till it was said to him, that, as he had been faithful over a few things in Cæsarea, so let him come up to where his memorial was written, and he would be set over twelve legions of angels. "For," says John Calvin on Cornelius, "God keeps a careful memorial concerning all His servants, and by sure and certain steps He exalts them till they come to the top."

Now, the main point is, what about your memorial and mine? What about your alms and your prayers and mine? What about your fastings, and shut doors, and mine, in order that we may have a day now and then of undistracted, and concentrated, and self-chastening prayer? Has there ever been joy in heaven over your prayers and your alms and mine? Real joy in heaven among the angels and the saints of God? And do the faces and the wings of those messenger-spirits shine as they carry the latest memorial that has come up to heaven concerning us to tell the news of it to those in heaven who loved us on earth? Let us pray more, and give alms more, if only to add to the joy of God's angels and saints who remember us and wait for news about us in heaven.

But, a man of prayer, and a benevolent man, and a man with a memorial in heaven, as Cornelius

was, he had still much to learn. He had still the best things to learn. He had still to learn CHRIST. And the difficulties that lay in the Roman centurion's way to learn Christ, you have simply no conception of. Till you read the Acts of the Apostles, as not one in a thousand reads that rare book; nay, till you have to teach that rare book to others, you will never at all realise what the centurion had to come through before he could be a complete Christian man. Ay, and what Christ's very best apostles themselves had to come through before they would have anything to do with such an unclean and four-footed beast as Cornelius was to them. It was twelve o'clock of the day at Joppa, and it was the very next day after the angel had made his visit to Cornelius about his memorial. And Peter, like the centurion, was deep that day in special prayer. Now, Peter must surely have been fasting far too long, as well as praying far too earnestly, for he fell into a faint as he continued to pray. And as he lay in his faint he dreamed, as we say; a vision was sent to him, as Scripture says. And in his vision Peter saw heaven opened above him, and a certain vessel descending unto him, as it had been a great sheet knit at the four corners and let down to the earth. Wherein were all manner of four-footed beasts of the earth, and wild beasts, and creeping things, and fowls of the air. And there came a voice to him, Rise, Peter, kill, and eat. But Peter said, Not so, Lord: for I have never eaten anything that is common or unclean. And the voice spake

unto him again the second time, What God hath cleansed, that call not thou common. And scarcely had the sheet been drawn up to heaven, when three of Cornelius's servants knocked at the tanner's door, and asked if one Simon Peter lodged here. And when Peter saw the three men, and heard their message from Cornelius, he at once comprehended and fully understood the heavenly vision. And the vision was this. Cornelius and all his soldiers, devout and indevout, and all his domestic servants, and all the Roman people, good and bad, and all other nations of men on the face of the earth; all mankind, indeed, except Peter and a few of his friends, were bound up together in one abominable bundle. And Peter was standing above them, scouting at and spitting on them all. All so like ourselves. For, how we also bundle up whole nations of men and throw them into that same unclean sheet. Whole churches that we know nothing about but their bad names that we have given them, are in our sheet of excommunication also. All the other denominations of Christians in our land are common and unclean to us. Every party outside of our own party in the political state also. We have no language contemptuous enough wherewith to describe their wicked ways and their self-seeking schemes. They are four-footed beasts and creeping things. Indeed, there are very few men alive, and especially those who live near us, who are not sometimes in the sheet of our scorn; unless it is one here and one there of our own family, or school, or party. And they also come under our scorn and our contempt

the moment they have a mind of their own, and interests of their own, and affections and ambitions of their own. It would change your whole heart and life this very night if you would take Peter and Cornelius home with you and lay them both to heart. It would be for a memorial about you before God if you would but do this. If you would take a four-cornered napkin when you go home, and a Sabbath-night pen and ink, and write the names of the nations, and the churches, and the denominations, and the congregations, and the ministers, and the public men, and the private citizens, and the neighbours, and the fellow-worshippers,—all the people you dislike, and despise, and do not, and cannot, and will not, love. Heap all their names into your unclean napkin, and then look up and say, 'Not so, Lord. I neither can speak well, nor think well, nor hope well, of these people. I cannot do it, and I will not try.' If you acted out and spake out all the evil things that are in your heart in some such way as that, you would thus get such a sight of yourselves that you would never forget it. And, for your reward, and there is no better reward, like Peter, you would one day come to be able to say, 'Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons. But in every nation, and church, and denomination, and party of men, and among those I used to think of as four-footed beasts of the earth, and wild beasts, and creeping things, God has them that fear Him, and that work righteousness, and that are accepted of Him.' And then it would go up for a memorial

before God, the complete change and the noble alteration that had come to your mind and to your heart. For you would be completely taken captive before God by that charity which vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, thinketh no evil, believeth all things, hopeth all things. And now abideth faith, hope, charity; but the greatest of these is charity.

Such are some of the lessons it is intended we should take to heart out of the story of Cornelius, the Roman centurion.

C

EUTYCHUS

HIS Eutychus is the father of all such as fall asleep under sermons. And he well deserves all his fame, for he fell sound asleep under an action sermon of the Apostle Paul. We do not know how much there may have been to be said in exculpation or extenuation of Eutychus and his deep sleep during that sacrament service. Eutychus may have suppered his horses four-and-twenty hours before, and given a boy a shilling to look after them till his return home from the Communion Table at Troas. Like an old friend of mine who used to do that, and then to travel all night from Glenisla to Dundee in order to be present at Mr. M'Cheyne's Communion. After which he walked home and took his horses out to the plough in good time on Monday morning. Only, I feel quite sure that Mr. M'Cheyne never needed to go down and raise my old friend to life again, as Paul had to do to the dead Eutychus. For he never fell asleep, I feel quite sure, neither under Mr. M'Cheyne's action sermon, nor during the three afternoon tables, no, nor under the evening sermon of Daniel Cormick of

Kirriemuir, who used to preach not short sermons on such occasions, but never one word too long for St. Peter's, Dundee, in those pre-disruption days.

The sacred writer does not in as many words take it upon himself to blame the Apostle for his long sermon that night. Though what he does say so emphatically and so repeatedly would be unpardonable blame to any other preacher. What blame, indeed, could be more unpardonable to any of your preachers than what the Apostle was guilty of that night? The like of it has never been seen again since that night. To keep his hearers from the time of lighting the candles till the sun rose next morning! Matthew Henry would like to have had the heads of Paul's sermon that night. But my idea is that Paul's sermon had no heads that night. My idea is that as soon as the candles were lighted Paul recited his warrant for the celebration of the Lord's Supper, as we now read that warrant from his pen in First Corinthians. After which he would enter on the nature and the ends of the Supper, which would take some time to explain and exhaust. He would then diverge to tell the Troas people the never-ending story of how he came to be a catechumen and a communicant himself at first. He would then go on to the mystical union that subsists between Jesus Christ and all true communicants, during the deep things of which Eutychus would fall fast asleep. I know nothing so like that richest part of Paul's sermon as our own Robert Bruce's not short Sermons on the Sacrament, which Dr. Laidlaw has put into such

good English, and Mr. Ferrier into such good buckram, for us the other day. And then, even after the accident to Eutychus, Paul was still so full of matter and of spirit, that he actually went on with his post-communion address till the sun rose on the cups still standing on the table, and on the elders standing beside them, and Paul still pouring out his heart from the pulpit.

Now, notwithstanding Paul's example, all our preachers should, as a rule, be short in their sermons. In Luther's excellent portrait of a good preacher, one of such a preacher's nine virtues and qualities is this, that he should know when to stop. So he should. Only, you have no idea how fast the pulpit clock goes when a preacher has anything still on his mind that he wishes to say. At the same time, every sermon is not to be cut according to the sand-glass. John Howe first attracted Cromwell by preaching for two hours and then turning the sand-glass for a third hour. And Coleridge in his notes on Dr. Donne, and on an hour and a half sermon of his preached at Whitehall, says: "Compare this manhood of our Church divinity with our poor day. When I reflect on the crowded congregations, and on the thousands who with intense interest came to those hour and two-hour sermons, I cannot believe in any true progression, moral or intellectual, in the minds of the many." And since I have Coleridge open at any rate, I must not deny you what Hazlitt says about Coleridge's own preaching: "It was in January, 1798, that I rose one morning before

daylight, to walk ten miles in the mud, to hear this celebrated person preach. When I got there, the organ was playing the hundredth Psalm, and when it was done Mr. Coleridge rose and gave out his text. And his text was this: "He departed again into a mountain Himself alone." As the preacher gave out his text his voice rose like a stream of distilled perfumes; and when he came to the last two words of the text, which he pronounced loud, deep, and distinct, it seemed to me, who was then young, as if the sounds had echoed from the depths of the human heart. The preacher then launched into his subject like an eagle dallying with the wind. For myself, I could not have been more delighted if I had heard the music of the spheres. Poetry and philosophy had met together, truth and genius had embraced each other, and that under the sanction of religion." Now, a preacher like Coleridge, and a hearer like Hazlitt, are not to be cut short by all the sand-glasses and pulpit-clocks in the world. Sand-glasses and pulpit-clocks are made for such preachers and hearers, and not such preachers and hearers for sand-glasses and pulpit-clocks.

But another thing. Paul did not have his manuscript before him that night, and that circumstance was partly to blame for the too-great length of his sermon. I will be bold to take an illustration of that night in Troas from myself. When I am in Paul's circumstances; that is to say, when I have only once the opportunity to preach in any place,

I never on such an occasion read my sermon from a paper. I just give out the Scripture text that I am myself living upon at that time, and then I speak out of such a heart as is given to me at that moment. But the danger of such preaching is just that which Luther has pointed out—I never know when to stop. Just as Paul did not know when to stop that night. And just as Luther himself, not seldom exceeded all bounds. Without a paper, not one preacher in a hundred knows when to stop. He forgets to look at the clock till it is far too late. With a paper, and with nothing more to say than is down on the paper, you stop at the moment. But not restricted to a paper, and with your mind full of matter, and your heart full of feeling, you go on till midnight. At home you hearers know what your minister is going to say, and you are able to settle yourselves down to sleep as soon as he gives out his text. But he has much more honour when he goes outside of his own congregation. And thus it is that you hear of how he preached so long, and was so much enjoyed, when away from home. That was Paul's exact case. If this was not his first and his only sermon at Troas, it was certainly his last. The Apostle would never see those Troas people again till the day of judgment; and who shall blame him if he completely forgot the sand-glass, and poured out his heart all night upon that entranced congregation, At the same time, and after all is said, Luther is quite right. A good preacher should know when

to stop. In other words, as a rule, and especially at home, he should be short.

But, then, there are two sides to all that also. And your side is this. I never see any of you fall asleep at an election time. No, not though the speaking goes on till midnight. And, yet, I do not know that the oratory of the political candidates and their friends is so much better than the oratory of the pulpit. But this is it. Your own passions are all on fire in politics, whereas you are all so many Laodiceans in religion. Yea, what carefulness your politics work in you; yea, what clearing of yourselves; yea, what indignation; yea, what fear; yea, what vehement desire; yea, what zeal; yea, what revenge. So much so, that the poorest speaker on the party-platform will have no difficulty in keeping your blood up all night to the boiling point. At the same time, I frankly admit, few preachers preach with the passion, and with the issues at stake, that the politicians, or even the playactors, speak. And thus, on the whole, the sum of the matter is this—that, what between too long sermons, and too cold, the blame lies largely at every preacher's door.

And, then, even more than our sermons, our prayers should be short; our public prayers, that is. You may be as long as you like in secret, but not in public, not in the family, not in the prayer-meeting, and not in the pulpit. Bishop Andrewes, the best composer of prayers in all the world of prayers, is not short. His prayer for the first day of the week occupies fifteen pages. His prayer for

the second day of the week covers eight pages. His three prayers on awaking take up six pages. His Horology five pages. His four Acts of Deprecation eleven pages, and so on. But then these not short prayers are printed in his *Private Devotions*, which his trustees could scarcely read, so kneaded into a pulp were they with Andrewes's sweat and tears. And no wonder, if you knew his history. William Law, on the other hand, was short and exact in his private devotions. But, then, to make up for that, he was so incomparably methodical, so regular, so punctual, and so concentrated, in the matter of his prayers. He was like James Durham, of whom William Guthrie said that no man in all Scotland prayed so short in public as Durham did; but, then, "every word of Durham's would have filled a firlot." Look at Paul's short prayers also. Every word would fill a firlot. And so the hundred and nineteenth Psalm. Every single verse of that psalm is a separate prayer which might have been written by the laird of Pourie Castle. At any rate, we are saying that every night in our family worship at home at present. We take a different kind of Scripture in the morning when all the children are with us. But at night we just take one verse of that Old Testament James Durham, and every heart in the house is straightway filled like a firlot before God. The Lord's Prayer is short also, because it is not His prayer at all, but is composed for us and for our children. But His private devotions were not only far longer than Bishop Andrewes's, but are far more illegible to us with His tears and His blood.

And, then, if you ever rise to be an author, make your books short. You may be a great author and yet your books may all the time be very short among books. The Song is a short book. So is the Psalms. So is the Gospel of John. So is the Epistle to the Romans. So is the *Confessions*. So is the *Divine Comedy*. So is the *Imitation*. So is the *Pilgrim's Progress*, and so is the *Grace Abounding*. Brother Lawrence *On the Practice of the Presence of God* is so short that it will cost you only fourpence. I had occasion a moment ago to mention William Guthrie. Said John Owen, drawing a little gilt copy of Guthrie's *Saving Interest* out of his pocket, "That author I take to be one of the greatest divines that ever wrote. His book is my *vade mecum*. I carry it always with me. I have written several folios, but there is more divinity in this little book than in them all." "I am finishing Guthrie," said Chalmers, "which I think is the best book I ever read." And I myself read the whole of Guthrie in Melrose's beautiful new edition the other day between Edinburgh and London. All the greatest authors have been like Guthrie, and like Luther's best preachers, they have known when to stop. Let all young men who would be great authors, study and imitate all the short books I have just signalised. And though it is not a short book, and could not be, let them all read Professor Saintsbury's new book, out of which I borrow this last advice: "Phrynichus is redundant and garrulous; for when it was open to him to have got the matter completely finished off in not a fifth part of his actual length, by saying things out of

season, he has stretched his matter out to an unmanageable bulk."

Now, after all that about preaching, and about prayer, and about great authorship, Eutychus did not fall out of the window for nothing, if we learn from his fall some of these valuable lessons.

CI

FELIX

OUR original authorities for the life of Felix are Luke in the Acts of the Apostles, Josephus in the *Antiquities* and in the *Wars of the Jews*, and Tacitus in the *Annals of the Romans*. Luke gives us one of his most graphic chapters about Felix; but he abstains, as the Bible manner is, from judging even Felix before the time. Josephus is graphic enough about Felix, but we are sure neither of Josephus's facts nor of his judgments. We cannot go very far either for or against any man on the word of such a witness as Josephus. But Tacitus scars Felix's forehead as only Tacitus's pen can scar. Tacitus, as his manner is, anticipates the very day of judgment itself in the way he writes about Felix. Felix began his life as a slave, and he ended his life as a king. But, as Tacitus says, there was a slave's heart all the time under Felix's royal robes. All what evil secrets lay hidden in Felix's conscience we do not know; but we have only too abundant testimony as to how savage, how treacherous, and how steeped in blood, Felix's whole life had been. Luke calls Drusilla the wife of Felix.

Drusilla was a wife, but she was not the wife of Felix. Drusilla was still a young woman, but she had already come through wickedness enough to stamp her as one of the worst women in the whole of human history. Paul was lying in prison waiting for his trial at Felix's judgment-seat, when, most probably to satisfy Drusilla's guilty curiosity about Paul and about Paul's Master, Felix sent for Paul to hear what he had to say for himself and for his Master. How the interview opened, and how Paul conducted his discourse, we are not told. But this we are told, that as Paul continued to reason of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, Felix trembled, and answered, "Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee."

"The ears of our audiences must first be propitiated," says Quintilian in his *Institutes of Oratory*. And Dante but borrows from that fine book when he tells all public speakers in his *Banquet* that they must always begin by taking captive the goodwill of their hearers. Now, just how Paul managed to propitiate Felix's unfriendly ears that day, and to take captive his hardened heart, we are not told. But that the great preacher did succeed in getting a hearing from Felix is certain. And it was neither a short hearing nor a hostile that Felix gave to Paul that day. Felix sat in transfixed silence while Paul stood up before him, and plunged the two-edged sword of God's holy law into his guilty conscience, till the hardened reprobate could not command himself. A greater seal was never set to

the power of Paul's preaching than when Felix shook and could not sit still under the Apostle's words. And a greater encouragement could not possibly be given to all true preachers than that scene in the palace of Cæsarea gives to them. What an ally, unseen but omnipotent, all true preachers have in the consciences of their hearers! "The conscience," says the prince of Puritan expository preachers, "is what the snout is in a bear, a tender part to tame him by. Conscience is acutely sensible to God's wrath. And hell-fire itself could not take hold of the soul but at this corner."

> O conscience! who can stand against thy power!
> Endure thy gripes and agonies one hour!
> Stone, gout, strappado, racks, whatever is
> Dreadful to sense are only toys to this.
> No pleasures, riches, honours, friends can tell
> How to give ease to thee, thou'rt like to hell.

If Felix had but sat still a little longer, Paul was just going on to tell him how to get ease to the hell that was beginning to burn in his bosom. But I suspect Drusilla at that moment. I cannot get over my suspicion that it was Drusilla who so suddenly cut short Paul's discourse, and sent him back to his prison. I do not read that Drusilla trembled. My belief about that royal pair is, that had Drusilla not sat beside Felix that day, Felix would have been baptized, and Paul would have been set free, before the sun had gone down. But Drusilla and her sisters have cast into their graves many wounded. Many strong men have been slain to death by them. Their house is the way to hell,

and their steps go down to the chambers of death.

"Go thy way for this time," said Felix to Paul, "when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee." Felix never sat at a Communion Table. But many of us here to-night who sat at that table to-day have in effect said Felix's very words to-day to God and to our own consciences. Many of us trembled at the table to-day, but we recovered ourselves with this resolution—that we would repent and amend our ways at another time. More action-sermons and more table-addresses have been silenced and forgotten because of a postponed repentance than because of anything else. Felix did not really intend to shut Paul's mouth for ever. He did not intend to go before God's judgment-seat just as he was that day. And no more do we. We honestly intend to live righteously and temperately—after a time. When we are in other circumstances. When we have other companionships. When we have formed other and better relationships. After that happy alteration in our life to which we are looking forward, you will find us very different men. When I am old, says one. Not too old. But when I am somewhat older and much less occupied. I will then have time to give to secret prayer. I will then have on my table, and near my bedside, some of those books my minister has so often besought me to buy and to read at a Communion season. I will then attend to God and to my own soul. Poor self-deceived creature that you are! Cruelty and uncleanness have slain their thousands; but a life

like yours, a life simply of putting off repentance and reformation, has slain its tens of thousands.

But Felix, after all, was as good as his word, so far. Felix did actually call for Paul again, and that not once nor twice, but often, and communed with him in the palace. Only, it had almost been better he had not done so, for he always did it with a bad motive in his mind. It was not to hear out Paul's interrupted discourse that Felix sent for Paul. The sacred writer is able to tell us what exactly Felix's secret motive was in so often giving the Apostle an audience. "He hoped also that money should have been given him of Paul, that he might loose him; wherefore he sent for him the oftener, and communed with him. But after two years Porcius Festus came into Felix's room; and Felix, willing to show the Jews a pleasure, left Paul bound." And it is because our motives in coming to church are so mixed that the years allowed us for our salvation pass on till some one else occupies our pew, and the preaching of salvation has for ever come to an end as far as we are concerned.

> Pulpits and Sundays; sorrow dogging sin;
> Afflictions sorted; anguish of all sizes;
> Without our shame; within our consciences;
> Yet all these fences, and their whole array,
> One cunning bosom sin blows quite away.

I have known a man come to a church for a slip of a girl; another as a stepping-stone to some great man's favour; another for the advantage of his shop; and another for the chance of a tippet and a chain and a hoped-for handle to his name,

and so on. Felix sat under Paul's preaching because his household expenses in Cæsarea were so great, and his resources so low, and his debts so heavy. And because he had been told that Paul had such rich friends, that they could and would pay any price for his release. And who can tell how Felix's calculations might have turned out, had it not been that Cæsar so suddenly sent for Felix to come to Rome to give an account of his stewardship; and all that, most unfortunately, before Paul's rich friends had time to come forward. Many that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt for the found-out reasons why they went to this church or to that.

It is like the fresh air of heaven itself to turn from Felix's church attendances in this matter of motive, and to turn to Paul. For, when the royal message summoning Paul to the palace was delivered to him in his prison, what was Paul's first thought, do you think? Paul was a great man. Paul was a noble-minded man. Paul was a true and a pure-hearted man. Paul never thought of himself at all. He never once said to himself how all this might tell upon his release and his liberty. Dear and sweet as release and liberty were to Paul, these things never once came into his mind that day. Felix and Drusilla alone came into his mind that day; Drusilla especially. For Drusilla was a Jewess; she was a daughter of Abraham; and Paul's heart's desire and prayer to God for long

had been that Drusilla might be saved. And here, in this opportunity to him, was the answer to his prayer! And thus it was that all the way up from his prison to her palace Paul was thinking only of that wicked and miserable pair, with their fearful looking for of judgment. Till, with his heart full of all that, as Paul was led into the presence-chamber, Felix turned to Drusilla, and pointing to Paul, he as good as said to her—

> Lo! this man's brow like to a title-leaf,
> Foretells the nature of a tragic volume!
> He trembles, and the whiteness in his cheek
> Is apter than his tongue to tell his errand!
> Even such a man
> Drew Priam's curtain in the dead of night.

It was the snow-white purity of Paul's motives that gave to his words, and to his whole look and manner, such last-day power as he stood and spoke before Felix. Paul's eye was so single at that moment that the whole palace was filled to Felix as with the light of the great white throne itself. No other man knows with a full certainty any or all of his neighbour's motives. At the same time, I have come to think that the purity of a preacher's motives has very much to do with his success. Not always, perhaps; but sufficiently often to make it a good rule for all of us who are, or are to be, preachers. For instance, to speak of two very successful preachers who have lately gone to give in their account and to reap their reward—Moody and Spurgeon. I have always attributed their immense and their lasting success to the singleness of their

eye and the transparency of their motives. And therefore it is that I am always directing young probationers who are going to preach in a vacancy to read before they go Dr. Newman's sermon entitled, "The Salvation of the Hearer the Motive of the Preacher." I constantly tell them that this desired call, if it is to be a call to them from Christ, will largely lie in their motive that day. If the preacher makes the vacant congregation tremble like Felix till they forget themselves, that is the preacher for them, and that is the people for him. Let all probationers of the pulpit study that same great writer's noble lecture, entitled "University Preaching," and they will thank me for this instruction all their days.

And now to conclude. I can imagine no other night in all the year so convenient as just the night after a Communion day. I can imagine no night in all the year so acceptable to Christ, and so welcome to His Father. No day and no night in which our Redeemer so desires to see of the travail of His soul. No night in which He has so much joy in seeing either a sinner repenting, or a saint returning. It is a special night for new beginners, and it is famous for the restoring of backsliders' souls. This is the night, then, for us all to date from. It was that day, it was that night, when we had Felix, you will say all your days on earth. My Lord met me, you will say, in that house of His, and on that night of His. Come away then, and make a new start on the spot. Come away, and there will be a joy in heaven to-night that there

will not be but for you. Oh! do come, and let this house have this honour in heaven henceforth, because this man and that man were born here. And, in saying that, it is not I that say it. Jesus Christ Himself singles you out of all the congregation and says to you, as if you were alone in this house, Come! Come, He says, and let us reason together. And if you are a very Felix and a very Drusilla; if your unrighteousness, and your intemperance, and your fearful looking for of judgment, are all as dreadful as were theirs; even were your sins as scarlet as were theirs, they shall be as white as snow. And though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool. Who, then, this Communion evening, will come forward like the brave man in Bunyan, and will say to him who has the book and the pen and the ink-horn in his hand, Set down my name, sir! At which there was a most pleasant voice heard from those within, even of those who walked upon the top of the king's palace, saying—

> Come in, come in,
> Eternal glory thou shalt win.

So he went in, and was clothed with the same garments as they were clothed with. Then Christian smiled, and said, I think verily that I know the true meaning to me of this great sight, and the true intention to me of this great Scripture.

CII

FESTUS

A SINGLE word will sometimes immortalise a man. Am I my brother's keeper? was all that Cain said. And, What will you give me? was all that Judas said. One of his own words will sometimes, all unintentionally, sum up a man's whole past life. A man will sometimes discover to us his deepest heart, and will seal down on himself his own everlasting destiny, just with one of his own spoken words. By thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned. And as Paul thus spake for himself, Festus said with a loud voice, Paul, thou art beside thyself; much learning doth make thee mad. With that one word Festus ever after it is known to us quite as well as if Tacitus himself had written a whole chapter about Festus. This is enough: Festus was that Roman procurator who said with a loud voice that Paul was beside himself. That one word, with its loud intonation, sets Festus sufficiently before us.

Their ever-thoughtful ever-watchful Lord had taken care to prepare His apostles for this insult

also. The disciple is not above his master, nor the servant above his Lord. It is enough for the disciple that he be as his master, and the servant as his Lord. If they have called the Master of the house Beelzebub, how much more shall they call them that are of His household. And the loud and unbecoming outbreak of Festus would have staggered Paul much more than it did, had he not recollected at that moment that this very same thing had been said about his Master also. And that not by heathens like Pilate and Festus, but by those whom the Gospels call His friends. "And when His friends heard of it they went out to lay hold on Him, for they said, He is beside Himself." And many of the Jews, as soon as they had heard His sermon on the Good Shepherd, of all His sermons, had nothing else to say about the Preacher but this, He hath a devil, and is mad; why hear ye Him?

First, then, as to our Master's own madness. It is plain, and beyond dispute, that either He was mad, or they were who so insulted Him. For He loved nothing that they loved. He hated nothing that they hated. He feared nothing that they feared. Birth, wealth, station, and such like things, without which other men cannot hold up their heads; of all that He emptied Himself, and made Himself of no reputation. And, to complete the contrast and the antipathy, the things that all other men despise and spurn and pity He pronounces to be alone blessed. Meekness under insults and injuries, patience amid persecutions,

poverty of spirit, humbleness of mind, readiness to serve rather than to sit in honour and eat,—these are the only things that have praise and reward of Paul's Master. The things, in short, we would almost as soon die as have them for our portion. And the things we would almost as soon not live at all as not possess, or expect one day to possess, Jesus Christ cared nothing at all for such things. Absolutely nothing. It was no wonder that her neighbours and kinsfolk condoled with His mother who had borne such a son. It was no wonder that they worked incessantly upon His brethren till they also said, Yes; He must be beside himself; let us go and lay hold on him.

Now, Paul came as near to his Master's madness as any man has ever come, or ever will come, in this world. For, what made Festus break out in that so indecent way was because Paul both spake and acted on the absolute and eternal truth of the things we speak about with bated breath, and only faintly and inoffensively affect to believe. Paul had been telling his royal auditors what he never wearied telling; his undeserved, unexpected, and unparalleled conversion. His manner of life before his conversion also, when he put this very same word into Festus's mouth. I was exceedingly "mad," he said, against the saints. And at midday, O king, he said, addressing himself with an orator's instinct to Agrippa, a light from heaven above the brightness of the sun, and a voice speaking to me in the Hebrew tongue—and so on, till Festus broke out upon him, as we read. Now, if you had come

through the half of Paul's experience, we also would have charged you also with being beside yourself. To have had such bloody hands; to have been carried through such a conversion; to have had, time after time, such visions and revelations of the Lord; and, especially, to have had such experiences and such attainments in the divine life—certainly, to us you would have been beside yourself. To have seen you actually and in everything counting all things, your very best things, your very virtues and very graces, to be but dung, that you might win Christ; to have seen you continually crucified with Christ; what else could we have made of you? How else could we have defended ourselves against you, but by calling you mad?

But Paul had more than one experience that made him appear mad to other men. And another of those experiences was his unparalleled experience and insight into sin. Paul's sinfulness of his own heart, when he was for a moment left alone with it, always drove him again near to distraction. As the sight of the ghost drove Hamlet mad, so did the sight of sin and death drive Paul. And not Paul only, but no less than our Lord Himself. If ever our Lord was almost beside Himself, it was once at the sight, and at the approach, and at the contact, of sin. We water down the terrible words and say that He was sore amazed and very heavy. But it was far more than that. A terror at sin, a horror and a loathing at sin, took possession of our Lord's soul when He was about to be made sin, till it carried Him away beyond all experience and all

imagination of mortal men. And the servant, in his measure, was as his Master in this also. For, as often as Paul's eyes were again opened to see the sinfulness of his own sin, there was only one other thing in heaven or earth that kept his brain from reeling in her distracted globe. And the sight of that other thing only made his brain reel the more. And so it has often been with far smaller men than Paul. When we ourselves see sin; even such a superficial sight of sin as God in His mercy sometimes gives us; both body and soul reel and stagger till He has to hold us up with His hand. And were it not that there is a fountain filled with something else than rose-water, there would be more people in the pond than the mother of Christian's children. What a mad-house because of the sinfulness of sin the church of God's saints would be were it not for His own blood! And this goes on with Paul till he has a doctrine of himself and of sin, such that he cannot preach it too often for great sinners like himself. No wonder, with his heart of such an exquisite texture and sensibility, and continually made such an awful battle-ground, no wonder Paul was sometimes nothing short of mad. And why should it be so difficult to believe that there may be men even in these dregs of time; one man here, and another there, who are still patterns to God, and to themselves, and to saints and angels, of the same thing? Beside themselves, that is, with the dominion and the pollution of sin. Was there not a proverb in the ancient schools that bears with some pungency

upon this subject? It is in Latin, and I cannot borrow it at the moment. But I am certain there is a saying somewhere about a great experiment and a great exhibition being made on an insignificant and a worthless subject.

I am old enough to remember the time when the universal London press, led by *Punch* and the *Saturday Review*, week after week, mocked, trampled on, cried madman at, and tried to silence, young Spurgeon, very much as Festus tried to trample on and silence Paul. But *Punch* lived to lay a fine tribute on Spurgeon's grave. It was true of Paul, and it was true of Spurgeon, and it will be true, in its measure, of every like-minded minister, as well as of all truly Christian men, what old Matthew Mead says in his *Almost Christian*. "If," says old Matthew, "the preaching of Christ is to the world foolishness, then it is no wonder that the disciples of Christ are to the world fools. For, according to the Gospel, a man must die in order to live; he must be empty, who would be full; he must be lost, who would be found; he must have nothing, who would have all things; he must be blind, who would see; he must be condemned, who would be redeemed. He is no true Christian," adds Mead, "who is not the world's fool." And, yet, no! I am not mad, most noble Festus; but speak forth the words of truth and soberness.

CIII

KING AGRIPPA

KING AGRIPPA was the grandson of Herod the Great, and he had succeeded to the shattered throne of his fathers; or rather, he had succeeded to such splinters of that throne as Cæsar had permitted him to set up. Agrippa was a king, but he was a king only in name. The Jews, as they themselves once said, had no king but Cæsar. At the same time, Cæsar sometimes, for reasons of state, set up sham kings over certain portions of his great empire. And Agrippa was one of those simulacrum sovereigns. Bernice, who here sits beside Agrippa, was his sadly-spotted sister. If you wade deep enough into the sixth satire of Juvenal, you will find Bernice more fully set forth in that pungent piece. As for ourselves, we will look in silence at Bernice, as Holy Scripture does, and will then pass her by. But take a good look at her brother Agrippa. Look well at King Agrippa, for he is the last king of the Jews you will ever see. There has been a long line of Jewish kings since Saul and David and Solomon, but this is the last of them now. The Jews are not to have

even a shadow of a king any more. They are to have Cæsar only, till they cease to be. What a scene! Festus, Agrippa, Bernice, and the whole place full of Roman soldiers and civilians, with Paul standing in his chains, as a sort of holiday show and sport to them all. What a company! What a providence! What an irony of providence! Thou art permitted to speak for thyself, said the king to the prisoner. And the prisoner, after having spoken for himself, was led back to his cell, there to await the issue of his appeal to Cæsar. Great pomp and all, the ancient throne of David and Solomon is seen crumbling to its very last dust before our very eyes. While, bonds and all, Paul stands before Agrippa holding out, not his own hand only, but the very Hand of the God of Israel Himself, both to King Agrippa, to his sister Bernice, and to the whole decayed, dispersed, and enslaved house of Israel. So much so, that when Paul was led back to his prison that day Israel's doom was for ever sealed. We are now looking on one of the most solemnising scenes that is to be seen in the whole of human history.

It was the wonderful story of Paul's conversion, and that story as told by himself, that so deeply impressed King Agrippa and his sister Bernice in Cæsarea that day. Again, and again, and again, we have Paul's wonderful story fresh from his own heart. The story was new, and it was full of new wonderfulness to Paul himself, every time he told it. And it never failed to make an immense impression on all manner of people; as, indeed, it

does down to this day. And no wonder. For, just look at him, and listen to him. "My manner of life," said Paul, stretching forth his hand with the chain on it, "know all the Jews. For I verily thought with myself that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth." And then, how he did those things, and how he was still doing them, when a voice from heaven struck him down, and said, Saul, Saul, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest. And so on, with his wonderful story, till Festus could only shake off the spell of it by shouting out that Paul was mad. And till Agrippa, who knew all these matters far better than Festus knew them, confessed openly that, for his part, he believed every word of Paul's conversion; and, indeed, felt almost at that moment as if he were about to be converted himself. "Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian like thyself!" confessed King Agrippa. And to this day nothing is so persuasive to our hearts as just the story of a personal experience in religion. So much so, that without this so persuasive element, somehow or somewhere in his preaching, all any preacher says will fall short of its surest power. Even if his testimony is not always conveyed in that autobiographic and dramatic form in which Paul always tells his story; yet, unless there is something both of the conviction and the passion of a personal experience, both the pulpit and the pen will come far short of their fullest and their most persuasive power. Unless in every sermon and in every prayer the preacher as good as says with the

Psalmist, "Come, and hear, all ye that fear God, and I will declare what He hath done for my soul;" unless there is some such heartbeat heard as that, both our sermons and our prayers will be but lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot. "I preached sin with great sense," says John Bunyan. Which is just his fine old English for great experience, great feeling, and, indeed, great passion. And down to this very day we feel the still unspent surges of Bunyan's pulpit passion beating like thunder on the rocky coasts of his *Grace Abounding* and his *Holy War*. And, just as this narration of Paul's personal experience was almost Agrippa's conversion; and just as this and other like narrations of Paul's experience were not only almost but altogether Luther's conversion; and then just as Luther's experience was Bunyan's conversion and Bunyan's experience; and his incomparable narration of it your conversion and mine; so will it always be. "The judicious are fond of originals," says an anonymous author. So they are. And we are all among the judicious in that respect. And thus it is that original autobiographies, and diaries, and dramatic narrations: David's Psalms, Augustine's Confessions, Luther's Sermons, Andrewes's Private Devotions, Bunyan's Grace Abounding, Fraser, Halyburton, Boston, Spurgeon, and such like, are always so interesting, so perennially popular, and so fruitful both in conversion at the time, and in edification and in sanctification for long after. Let all our preachers then stretch forth their own hands, and not another man's; and let them answer for

themselves in their own pulpits, and to their own people; and, whether their hands are bound or free,—"I often went to the pulpit in chains," says John Bunyan,—Felix, and Festus, and Agrippa, and Bernice among their hearers will be compelled, each in their own way, to confess both the truth, and the authority, and the power, of all such preachers of an original, and a passionately undergone, experience.

"The ears of our audiences must first be propitiated," says Quintilian, that great teacher of ancient oratory. And Dante but borrows from that old master when he warns all public speakers that they must always begin by endeavouring to carry captive the goodwill of their hearers. Now, we can never enter a Jewish synagogue, nor stand beside him in a judgment-hall, nor pass by him as he preaches at a street corner, without both seeing and hearing Paul practising the *captatio benevolentiæ* of the ancient oratorical schools. And that, not because he had ever gone to those schools to learn their great art, but simply because of his own oratorical instinct, inborn courtesy, and exquisite refinement of feeling. No such urbanity, and no such good breeding, is to be met with anywhere in all the eloquence of Greece and Rome. It was his perfect Christian courtesy to all men, taken along with his massiveness of mind, his overmastering message, and his incomparable experiences,—it was all that taken together, that lifted up Paul to the shining top of universal eloquence. Festus, fresh from the most polished circles of the metro-

polis of the world, behaved like a boor beside his prisoner. The only perfect gentleman in all that house that day stood in chains, and all the bad manners, and all the insolence, sat in Cæsar's seat. Let us all, and ministers especially, aim to be gentlemen like Paul. In the pulpit, in the Presbytery, and in the General Assembly; ay, and even if we are at the bar of the General Assembly, as Paul so often was; let us behave there also like Paul, as far as our natural temperament, and supernatural refinement of temperament, will support us in doing so. Let us learn to say in effect, I think myself happy, King Agrippa, because I shall answer for myself this day before thee. Especially because I know thee to be expert in all customs and questions among the Jews. And when Festus assails us with his coarse-minded abuse, let us learn to say with all self-command, No, Most noble Festus. Or, far better still, let us hold our peace. Let us turn in silence from Festus and his brutality to Agrippa and Bernice, and say to them,—I would to God, that not you only, but also all that hear me this day, were both almost, and altogether such as I am, except these bonds. Holding out his hands, "except these bonds." Beautiful and noble, beyond all Greek and Latin art. Is there a touch like that again in all the world? What a heart! What tenderness! What fineness of feeling! What gold would we not give for one single link of those iron bonds that day!

But Paul, with all his fascination, must not be permitted to draw our attention away from Agrippa.

And that, because Agrippa has lessons to teach us to-night that Paul himself, with all his eloquence, and even with his wonderful conversion itself, is not able to teach us. For Agrippa, you must know, to begin with, was half a Jew. By blood he was half a Jew; whilst by education, and by interest, and by sympathy, he was wholly a Jew; if it had only been possible for Agrippa to be outwardly, and openly, and honestly, what, all the time, he really was in his heart. And thus it was that Paul so fastened upon Agrippa and would not let him go. Thus it was that Paul so addressed himself to Agrippa: so passed by Festus and all the rest of his audience, and spoke home to Agrippa, and that with such directness and such power. And Agrippa felt Paul's full power, till he openly confessed that he felt it. So much so, that when Festus forgot himself, and broke out upon Paul in such an indecent manner, Agrippa interposed, and said, 'Not only is Paul speaking the words of truth and soberness, but he has all but persuaded me and my sister to take his side, and to be baptized.' But, before I come to that, what do you think about this scene yourselves? Applying your own common sense, and your own imagination, to this whole scene, what do you say about it yourselves? About Agrippa's speech, that is. Was Agrippa speaking ironically and mockingly when he said that Paul had almost persuaded him to be a Christian? Or did he honestly and sincerely mean what he said? There is a division of opinion about that. Did he mean that, King Agrippa as he was, and Festus's

guest as he was, and Bernice's brother as he was, he was within a hairsbreadth of casting in his lot with Paul, and with Paul's Lord and Saviour? I, for one, believe that Agrippa was entirely honest and true and without any guile in what he said. And that Paul and Agrippa were so near shaking hands before Festus and all the court at that moment; so near, that their not altogether doing so on the spot makes that one of the most tragical moments in all the world. A tragical moment only second to that you will perpetrate to-night, if you feel what Agrippa felt, and say what Agrippa said, and then go away and do what Agrippa did. "Almost," is surely the most tragic word that is ever heard uttered on earth or in hell. And yet, both earth and hell are full of it. Almost! Almost! Almost! An athlete runs for the prize, and he almost touches the winning-post. A marksman shoots at the target, and he almost hits it. A runner leaps for his life over a roaring flood, and he almost clears the chasm. A ship is almost within the harbour, when the fatal storm suddenly strikes her till she goes down. The five foolish virgins were almost in time. And Agrippa and Bernice were almost baptized, and thus their names almost entered into the Church of Christ. And so it is to-night with some of yourselves. Some of yourselves who were not, were almost, at the Lord's table to-day. You intended to be at it at one time. You were almost persuaded at the last Communion season. Now, just go down and ask Agrippa and Bernice what they would do if they were back in your place

to-night. They have had experience of what you are now passing through, and of how it ends. But if you find that between you and them there is a great gulf fixed; so that they which would pass to inquire of them cannot, neither can they come back with their experience to you. In that case, I myself have had an experience not much short of theirs, and I will tell you with all plainness, and earnestness, and anxiousness, and love, what I think you ought to do to-night. Do not sleep; nay, do not so much as go home, till your name has been taken down altogether for the next Lord's table.

CIV

LUKE, THE BELOVED PHYSICIAN

E have in our New Testament two most important books from the practised pen of Paul's beloved physician. And if the style is the man in Holy Scripture also, then, what with Paul's great affection for his faithful physician, and what with his own sacred writings, we feel a very great liking for Luke, and we owe him a very deep debt. To begin with, Luke was what we would describe in our day as a very laborious and conscientious student, as well as a very careful and skilful writer. Luke takes us at once into his confidence and confides to us that what made him think of putting pen to paper at all, was his deep dissatisfaction with all that had hitherto been written about the birth, the boyhood, the public life, the teaching, the preaching, the death, and the resurrection and ascension of our Lord. And then in a right workmanlike way this evangelist sets about the great task he has with such a noble ambition undertaken. Luke has not given us what cost him nothing. He did not sit down to his desk till he

had made innumerable journeys in search of all the materials possible. He spared neither time nor trouble nor expense in the collection of his golden contributions to our New Testament. Luke had never himself seen Jesus Christ in the flesh, so far as we know, and the men and the women who had both seen Him and heard Him when He was on earth were becoming fewer and fewer every day. Invidious death was fast thinning the ranks of those who had both seen and handled the Word of Life, till Luke had not a moment to spare if he was to talk with and to interrogate those who had actually seen their Lord with their own eyes. Joseph, and Mary, and James, and Joses, and Simon, and Judas, and His sisters, and His kinsfolk, and His twelve disciples—so many of them as were still in life—Luke set forth and sought them all out before he sat down to write his Gospel. Mary especially. And Mary opened her heart to Luke in a way she had never opened her heart to any one else. What was it, I wonder, that so opened Mary's so-long-sealed-up heart to this Evangelist? Was it that old age was fast coming on the most favoured among women? Was it that she was afraid that she might suddenly die any day with all these things still hidden in her heart? Was it that she was weary with forbearing and could not stay? Were His words in her heart as a burning fire shut up in her bones? His words that were known only to God, and to His Son, and to Gabriel, and to Joseph, and to herself. Or was it Paul's great name, taken together with

some of his great Epistles about her Son, that at last unlocked the treasure-house of Mary's heart and laid it open, full and free, to Paul's beloved physician and deputed secretary? Whatever it was, or however he got it, we have in Luke's Gospel as nowhere else, the whole hitherto hidden history of Mary's espousal, and Gabriel's annunciation, and the Virgin's visit to Zacharias and Elizabeth, as also Mary's Magnificat. And all up and down his great Gospel, and its so invaluable supplement, we have, on every page of his, fresh and abundant proofs both of Luke's industry and skill, as well as of his absorbing love, first for our Lord, and then for Paul. His characteristic Prefaces already prepare his readers both for his new and invaluable materials, as well as for an order and a finish in his books of an outstanding kind. There is an authority, and a presence of power, and, indeed, a sense of exhilaration, in Luke's two Prefaces, that only a discoverer of new and most important truth, and a writer of first-rate skill, is ever able to convey. Exhaustive inquiry, scrupulous accuracy, the most skilful and careful work, the most exalted instruction, and the most assured and fruitful edification—yes; the style is the man.

Such is Luke's literary skill, so to call it, that he makes us see for ourselves just the very verse in the Acts where his materials cease to be so many collections and digests of other men's memoranda and remembrances. With the sixth verse of the twentieth chapter this remarkable book all at once becomes autobiographical of Luke as well as bio-

graphical of Paul. Could anything be more reassuring or more interesting than to be able to lay one's finger on the very verse where the third person singular ends, and the first person plural begins? We feel as if we were looking over Luke's shoulder as he writes. We feel as if we saw the same divine boldness that moment take possession of his pen that marks with such peculiar power and authority the opening of his gospel. Paul was like Cæsar, and like our own Richard Baxter, in this respect, that he went on performing the most Herculean labours, if not in actual and continual sickness, then with the most overpowering sickness every moment threatening him, and, not seldom, suddenly prostrating him. And since his was, out of sight, the most valuable life then being spent on the face of the earth, no wonder that the churches insisted that the Apostle must not any more make his journeys alone. And accordingly, first one deacon accompanied him and then another, till it was found indispensable that he should have a physician also always with him. And in all the Church of Christ that day a better deacon for Paul and a better doctor could not have been selected than just the Luke on whom we are now engaged. 'Only remember,' Paul would expostulate with the young scholar and student of medicine, 'remember well what our Master said about Himself on a like occasion,—the foxes have holes and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man hath not where to lay His head.' But Luke was equal to the occasion. Luke was already a well-read man, and he had his

answer ready, and that out of Holy Scripture too. "Entreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee; for whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest I will lodge; where thou diest will I die, and there will I be buried; the Lord do so to me, and more also, if aught but death part thee and me." Till, when waiting for his martyrdom in Rome, Paul is able to write like this to Timothy, "I am now ready to be offered up, and the time of my departure is at hand. Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world, and is departed into Thessalonica. But Luke, and Luke only, is with me." "Honour a physician," says the Son of Sirach, "with all the honour due to him. Of the Most High cometh healing, for the Lord hath created him. And the healer shall receive honour of the King. The skill of the physician shall exalt his head, and in the presence of great men shall he be held in admiration." Luke had by heart the whole chapter, till, by the grace of God, he had it all fulfilled in himself, as Paul's beloved physician and our beloved third Evangelist.

Lessons, both literary and religious, offer themselves to us before we bring our short study of Paul's physician to a close. But chiefly religious. I do not know that there is any class of men in our day, scarcely the ministers of religion themselves, who have so much in their power, in some ways, as our medical men. Take a young medical man just settling down in a provincial town, or in a country district, and what an event that is in interest and

in opportunity. It is scarcely second to the settlement there of a good minister. What sort of a man, I wonder, is he? And what place will he take among us? it will be anxiously asked. And if he at once attaches himself to the Church; if he at once becomes a Sabbath-school teacher, a deacon, an elder, an abstainer, and so on; then, as Jesus the son of Sirach, says, that physician will be honoured with all the honour due to him, and in the presence of all good men will he be held in estimation. And over and above his study and imitation of Paul's beloved physician, let every young doctor have always beside him the Autobiography, the *Religio Medici*, of that great writer and great honour to the medical profession, Sir Thomas Browne. And not his inimitable masterpiece only, but all his fascinating books, will make a rare shelf in any young doctor's library. If Sir Thomas Browne is such a ceaseless delight to such men of letters as Johnson, and Coleridge, and Carlyle, and Hazlitt, and Pater, what a life-long delight and advantage would he be to those who are of his own so beloved profession, if they are only of his still more beloved faith and hope. It is delightful to read of the towns of England competing and contesting as to which of them should have young Browne to settle down and practise among them: such were his attainments, and such was his character, in his student days, and in his early professional life, and such was the largeness and richness of his mind, taken together with the purity and the piety of his heart and his character. All

of which purity and piety and true popularity is open to every young doctor everywhere. "Of the Most High cometh healing, for the Lord hath created the healer. The skill of the physician shall exalt his head, and in the presence of all men shall he be held in admiration," says the wise son of Sirach.

CV

ONESIPHORUS

NESIPHORUS was an elder in the Church of Ephesus, and a better elder there never was. Paul is but taking Onesiphorus's portrait when he says that an elder must be blameless, vigilant, sober, humble-minded, given to hospitality, one that ruleth his own house well, having his children in subjection with all gravity; moreover, he must have a good report of them that are without. Altogether, a striking likeness of a rare and a remarkable man. Paul had been Onesiphorus's minister for three years, and they had been three years of great labours and great sufferings on Paul's part, and you come to know your elders pretty well in three years like Paul's three years in Ephesus. The sacred writer has supplied his readers with Paul's farewell address to the elders of Ephesus, and a right noble address it is. "You know," he said, "from the first day I came into Asia, after what manner I have been with you at all seasons. Therefore, watch, and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one of you night and day with tears. And now, brethren, I

commend you to God, and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them that are sanctified." And from that he goes on to give us the great scene on the seashore, when Onesiphorus fell on Paul's neck, and could not be torn off Paul's neck till the ship had almost sailed away without Paul. Onesiphorus sorrowing most of all at the words which Paul spake that he should see his face no more. And, no wonder at Onesiphorus's inconsolable sorrow, since it is a universal and an absolute law that you love a man, and cannot part from him, just in the measure that you have long loved him, and done him good, and suffered for his sake in time past. All the elders in Ephesus loved Paul, and had good reason to love him, but all taken together they did not love Paul as Onesiphorus did. For it was Onesiphorus, more than all his colleagues in the eldership of Ephesus, who had kept the apostle alive during those three years of such temptations and so many tears. Many and many a time Paul would have fainted altogether had it not been for Onesiphorus. It was of those heartbreaking years of his in Ephesus that Paul was thinking when he said to Timothy that an elder must be vigilant, and hospitable, and not a novice. That is to say, Onesiphorus never let Paul out of his sight, day nor night, all those three trying years to Paul. "Night and day with tears," is Paul's own summing up of his three years' ministry in Ephesus. But, then, Onesiphorus always wiped away Paul's tears faster than Paul shed them, such was his

extraordinary vigilance and hospitality towards Paul. Many were the nights when after a trying day and then a refreshing supper Onesiphorus would give out this well-selected psalm at family worship—

> Who sow in tears, a reaping time
> Of joy enjoy they shall.
> That man who, bearing precious seed,
> In going forth doth mourn,
> He doubtless, bringing back his sheaves,
> Rejoicing shall return.

It was of those many Sabbath evening supper-parties that Paul remembered and wrote to Timothy in his Second Epistle to him: "How oft Onesiphorus refreshed me, and in how many things he ministered to me at Ephesus, thou knowest very well."

Now before we leave Ephesus and go to Rome with Onesiphorus, there is a lesson and an example here both for ministers who would fain imitate Paul, and for elders who would fain imitate Onesiphorus. Our ministers all have their own tears and temptations like the apostle. All men, indeed, have their own temptations and tears, but it is ministers we have now in hand. Our ministers, over and above the tears and the temptations which they share with all other men, have their own peculiar tears and temptations which it takes all Onesiphorus's vigilance to find out, and all his hospitality to alleviate. But, with all that, none of these things must move our ministers. They must only all the more bury themselves in

their work. They must let none of these things move them but to more and to better work. They must not let the praise of men, nor anything that man can do for them, be dear to them. Nothing must really be dear to our ministers but to finish their course with joy, and their ministry, which they have received of the Lord Jesus. At the same time, there is always plenty of scope for Onesiphorus, and for all his vigilance, alongside of every such ministry. I do not remember that it is in as many words in our elders' ordination oath, that they are always to refresh their minister's heart when he would otherwise faint. But Onesiphorus did it out of his own vigilance of love, never thinking whether it was in his ordination oath or no. And I myself have been as well looked after as ever Paul was, and far better. I have always had elders myself, who, with all their own occupations and preoccupations, never let me out of their vigilant minds and hospitable hearts. I could give you their names, and I am tempted to do so in order to give point and authority to what I am now saying. But I daresay you all know the names of those elders yourselves. For such elders as Onesiphorus was do not content themselves with refreshing their minister's heart only; they carry out their holy office to all the flock over the which the Holy Ghost hath made them overseers. The whole world knows Onesiphorus's name now; and even in our own so unapostolic day, the house of Onesiphorus still holds on its vigilant and hospitable way.

But all that is years and years ago. And things have by this time come to this pass with Paul that he is now ready to be offered up, and the time of his departure is at hand. In other words, the apostle is just about to be brought before Nero for the second time, and everybody knows what that means. Now it is out of these circumstances that Paul pens these beautiful words to Timothy: "When Onesiphorus arrived in Rome, and was there, he sought me out with all the greater diligence that he knew I was in chains, till at last he found me." Now there are two interpretations of these words, and you are free to take either of those two interpretations that best commends itself to you. What do you think? How are you led to read this passage about Onesiphorus and his visit to Rome? Do you think it would be this? That Onesiphorus, being a business man, had some mercantile errand to Rome; and then, after his hands were free of that matter he bethought himself that he would like to see his old minister before he returned home to Ephesus? Or does your heart revolt from that poor and mean and contemptible interpretation? And do you stand up for it, that it was something far better than the very best business-errand that brought Onesiphorus all the stormy way from Asia to Italy? Was it not once more to see his dearest friend on earth with whom he had so often transacted the great business of the soul, till he had by this time a great treasure laid up in heaven? If any of you owe your own soul, or your children's souls, to any minister, that

entitles you to interpret this passage to us, and to say whether it was business or religion, money or love, that brought Onesiphorus to Rome toward the close of Paul's second imprisonment. Like all other interpreters, you will understand Onesiphorus just according to what you would have done yourself had you been in his place. Whatever it was that brought Onesiphorus from Ephesus to Rome, we are left in no doubt at all as to what he did before he left Rome and returned to Ephesus. Paul might be the greatest of the apostles to Onesiphorus, and he may be all that and far more than all that to you and to me, but he was only "Number So and so" to the soldier who was chained night and day to Paul's right hand. You would not have known Paul from any incognisable convict in our own penal settlements. Paul was simply "Number 5," or "Number 50," or "Number 500," or some such number. From one barrack-prison therefore to another Onesiphorus went about seeking for Paul day after day, week after week, often insulted, often threatened, often ill-used, often arrested and detained, till he was set free again only after great suffering and great expense. Till, at last, his arms were round Paul's neck, and the two old men were kissing one another and weeping to the amazement of all the prisoners who saw the scene. Noble-hearted Onesiphorus! We bow down before thee. What a coal of holy love must have burned in thy saintly bosom! Thou hast taught us all a much-needed lesson to-night. For we also have friends, and especially in the ministry,

whose backs are often at the wall, whose names are often under a cloud, and who are forsaken of all men who should have stood by them. May we all come to be of thy vigilant and hospitable household! May we all have thy life-long and unquenchable loyalty to all those who suffer for righteousness' sake!

But now, my brethren, with all that, let us take very good care that the warmth of our present feelings over Onesiphorus does not all evaporate with this apostrophe to Onesiphorus. Let us not only admire and exalt Onesiphorus, let us forthwith imitate him. Let us, like him, seek out, and that too with all diligence, those who need, and especially those who deserve, our sympathy and our support. Ministers especially. Let us write them a letter of sympathy, let us make them a visit of sympathy, let us send them a gift of sympathy. Let us, in such ways as these, refresh them under their chains. Let us make them to feel that they are not so forgotten or so forsaken as they think they are. And this also. Like Onesiphorus also let us bring up our children to the same life of love. Let us take them with us sometimes when we go about doing good. Let them taste early the sweetness of doing good. And especially the sweetness and the reward of doing good to the suffering and the fainting in the household of faith. Let us set them to visit some godly and lonely old soul who will pray down present-day and last-day blessings on our head and on their heads, as Paul here does on the head of Onesiphorus and on the

heads of his household. Send your children to the Sick Children's Hospital on the Sabbath afternoons with books and flowers. Send the older ones to the Infirmary and to the Incurable Hospital with the same and other gifts. And go to the prison yourself like Onesiphorus in Rome. And do it at once, before all this about Paul and Onesiphorus evaporates off your heart and leaves it harder than it was before. For if it all evaporates off your heart it had been better you had never heard Onesiphorus's noble name. We have all seen to-night Onesiphorus in Ephesus and in Rome, and we shall all see him at least once again; only, not in this world. We shall all see him again, but not till "that day," as Paul has it in the text. We have had too short time to give to him and to ourselves to-night, but there will be no such hurry on "that day." For that will be a long day. An immense amount of divine business will have to be taken up and gone through on that day. Do you think that the accounts of the whole world could be got through in a day such as we have hitherto counted days? Almighty God Himself will not be able to do it in a day of twelve hours. No, nor in twenty-four hours. And you may depend upon it He will not once rise off His great white throne till He is justified in all His judgments. There will be plenty of time that day. There will be all eternity to draw upon to make up that day. The sun will stand still as soon as he is well up, and he will not set till the last deed of mercy done on the earth has been sought out, and its reward made to run over.

In spite of itself your left hand will be made to know on that day all that your right hand has hidden from it in this world: in Ephesus, and in Rome, and in Edinburgh. I was led a few moments ago to speak by way of illustration of some of our own Onesiphorus-elders. And one of them, who often refreshed his ministers, used to sit up there in the front gallery. I see him still as I now speak. It was dear Donald Beith. He will get a surprise on that day. He also will be found out on that day. Nay, I have found him out myself before that day. And since he is not here to deny it, I will tell you what you will hear about him from better lips than mine on that day. This will be told in your hearing, and you will say that you once heard it before in your accepted time, and in your day of salvation. More than one dark night my great friend sent his servant out to Fountainbridge, and up a dark stair, where a godly old soul lived without food or clothes or coals. The servant had strict injunctions to lay the heavy parcels up against the door, and then to knock and knock till he heard the deaf old cripple crawling toward the door, when he was to escape down the stair and out into the dark night like a thief from a detective. Donald Beith was a wily old Edinburgh lawyer, but I found him out sometimes, and you will see him with your own eyes found out again, to his consternation, on that day. What a day of surprises that day will be! What a day of leaping of all kinds of secrets to everlasting light will that day be! No wonder Paul so often calls it "that

day," and the "day of Christ," and many such-like great names. What a surprise, surprise after surprise, will Paul and Onesiphorus get on that day, and all stealthy and backstair men like Donald Beith. I think I see Paul, and Onesiphorus, and Donald Beith, and his Fountainbridge friend, all on one another's necks on that day, with their Saviour smiling over them as He sees of the travail of His soul in them, and proclaims that He is satisfied. O my God, may I be among them and one of them on that day; both I and all those whom Thou hast given me! The Lord grant unto me also that both I and they may find mercy of the Lord in that day!

CVI

ALEXANDER THE COPPERSMITH

THERE are some most interesting and most important questions of New Testament scholarship, and New Testament sanctification, connected with Alexander the coppersmith of Ephesus. And the first of those questions is this: Have we got in our present text the very and identical words that Paul penned in his parchment to Timothy? Have we got the literal and exact expressions, and discriminations of expressions, that Paul so studiously employed? Have we got the very moods and tenses, both in grammar and in morals, that were in Paul's mind and heart at the moment when he wrote these two so difficult verses about Alexander? That is a very interesting, important, and indeed indispensable, question. Only, the settlement of that question must be left in their hands who alone are able to grapple with such questions. But, meantime, a question and a lesson of the very foremost importance faces us and forces itself on the most unlearned and ignorant of us. And that question and that lesson is this. Suppose that Paul both thought and felt and wrote about Alexander as our version

literally reads, what are we to do? Are we free to follow Paul, and to do what he here does? Are we free to execrate and denounce bad men, and hand them over to be rewarded according to their works? Are we free, and is it our duty, to imprecate God's judgments on those who do us much evil, and who withstand the work of God which has been committed to our hands? A whole controversy of New Testament scholarship, and another whole controversy of New Testament morals and religion, have arisen around this text concerning Alexander the coppersmith. But, taking the text just as it has been put into our hands to-night, what are we able to make of it? What shall we succeed in taking out of it to-night for our own guidance to-morrow, and for every day we live on the earth?

The first time we come on Alexander he is a Jew of Ephesus, and a clever speaker to an excitable crowd. By the next time we meet with Alexander he has thought it to be for his interest to be baptized and to be seen openly on Paul's side. But Paul's side did not turn out to be so serviceable to the coppersmith as he had expected, and thus it is that he is next discovered to us as having made complete shipwreck of faith and a good conscience. And, then, as no man is so implacable at you as a complete renegade from you, so there was no man, among Paul's many enemies, who so hated Paul, and so hunted him down, as just this Alexander the coppersmith.

To go back to his beginning. Alexander had this temptation, that he was fitted by nature to be

much more than a mere coppersmith, he was so clever and so captivating with his tongue. Unless you are a man of a very single heart and a very sound conscience, it is a great temptation to you to be able in a time of public commotion to speak so as to sway the swaying multitude and to command their applause and their support. You rise on a wave of popularity at such a season, and you make use of your popularity for your own chief end in life. Many were the clever speeches the coppersmith made during his baptized days also; the Christians putting him forward to speak, just as the Jews were wont to put him forward when he was one of themselves. But, the wind working round and setting strongly in another direction, the coppersmith himself also instantly obeyed the law of the weather-cock he had fashioned with his own hands and had fastened on the roof of his workshop; for, as his copper creature did, so did he before the variable skies of those unsettled days. And thus it is, that when Paul is so soon to depart from all his false friends and all his implacable enemies alike, the Apostle writes this much-needed warning to his young and inexperienced successor, and says, "Alexander the coppersmith did me much evil, the Lord reward him according to his works, of whom be thou ware also, for he hath greatly withstood my words." Alexander did Paul and his apostolic work much evil, and that not out of ignorance and fanaticism, but out of sheer unmitigated malice. Sometimes malice is bought and sold in the open market, till everybody sees

it and understands it. Sometimes a man is to be had for money, and he will write letters or make speeches for you as long as you pay him best. But genuine malice is a different article from that. There is no getting to the bottom of real and original and priceless malice. Its bottom is not here. Its bottom is in the bottomless pit. Unless Alexander sets himself, nay, unless God sets Alexander, to search in his own heart for the roots of his malice against Paul, no other man can come near understanding or believing the depth and the strength and the malignity of Alexander's ill-will. At the same time, Paul and the other apostles could not but see as clear as day, and every day, Alexander's ill-will and the malignity of it, so much was it thrust upon their painful experience continually. Alexander followed Paul about wherever he went, poisoning the minds and the hearts of all men to whom his tongue or his pen had access. One of our latest and best authorities thinks that Alexander even followed Paul to Rome, and did his best to poison Nero and his court still more against Paul. But, whether he made that malicious and superfluous journey or no, Alexander certainly did Paul and his good name and his divine work all the evil that his great gifts of speech and pen could do. It was no wonder that the constant presence of Alexander, and his implacable and sleepless malice, was almost too great a trial for Paul to bear. So studied, so systematic, and so persistent, were Alexander's evil words and evil deeds.

Now, surely there can be no question as to Paul's

duty to Timothy in that case. Paul would have been sinning both against Timothy and against the Gospel had he not taken Timothy and warned him against the malignity of Alexander. True, Timothy had not yet suffered as Paul had suffered from the coppersmith. Alexander had not yet followed Timothy about poisoning the wells everywhere against him. But to prepare Timothy for what he might expect, and would be sure to meet with, Paul told Timothy, with all plainness and all pain, what his experience of Alexander and his malice had been. Now, what do you say? What do you do? Suppose such a man as Alexander the coppersmith has arisen in your community and is doing Alexander's very same work over again under your eyes every day, what do you do in that case? Do you content yourself with despising and detesting the mischief-making man in your heart? Should you not rather take some of his more wicked letters and speeches and point out to the simple and inexperienced the great lessons that lie on the face of such things? Is malice and misrepresentation less important to point out to a young man entering on life, than bad grammar and slovenly composition? There are studies in sheer malignity set us every day, as well as studies in style; and a teacher of morals should treat the one kind just as a teacher of letters always treats the other. Why should we be so careful to point out solecisms and careless composition to our young people, and pass by studied malice, misrepresentation, perversion, and suppression of the truth? And malice, too, that

is not limited and localised in its scope as Alexander's malice was in his day, but which has all the resources of civilisation in our day to spread it abroad. And resources also such that Alexander and his seed can do their wicked work in our day out of sight, and nobody know who they are till the day of judgment.

But by far and away our most important lesson out of Paul and Alexander is yet to come. Only, that lesson throws us back again on the previous question. Did Paul feel in his heart, and did he entertain and express to Timothy, all the anger and resentment that is expressed in the text? Did Paul actually say, "The Lord reward Alexander the coppersmith according to his evil works?" Whether he did or no, that makes no difference to us. Even if he did, we must never do so. Were another Alexander to rise in our day, ay, and were he to do all the evil to us and to our work that Alexander did to Paul and to his work, we must never say what Paul is here made to say, Paul was put by Alexander to the last trial and sorest temptation of an apostolic and a sanctified heart. And it is the last two-edged sword that pierces to the dividing of soul and spirit in ourselves, not to forgive insult and injury done to ourselves, but to forgive Alexander all that when he does it to the Church of Christ. Only, Christ Himself will have to be formed in you, and will have to live in you, and will have to think and feel and write in you, before you will be able to love that bad man, and to do him good, all the time he

is doing, not you, but Jesus Christ Himself, evil. But when Jesus Christ truly dwells in you, then no malediction, and no revenge; nothing but good wishes and good words, will ever escape your lips or your pen. It is for this that bad men like Alexander are let live among us. It is first for their own repentance and reformation, and then it is that they may be the daily sanctification of men like Paul. Of men, that is, who would not be tempted by any less spiritual trial than anger and resentment at the enemies, not of themselves, but of the Church of Christ. And such men among us are sent to school, not to David on his deathbed, nor to Paul in his prison, but to Jesus Christ on His Cross; Who, when He was reviled, reviled not again; when He suffered, He threatened not; leaving us an example, that we should follow His steps. I once asked a friend of mine who had been subjected to more reviling than any other man of his land and day, how he thought such and such another man who had suffered still more reviling could go on with his public work under such diabolical ill-usage. "Oh," said he, "So-and-so always lives *in facie eternitatis.*" And nothing but the nearness of eternity and the nothingness of time, and the still more nothingness of either the praise or the blame of such men as Alexander; nothing but the constant presence of such things as these could support Paul and could keep his heart quiet and sweet under the malice and maltreatment of such a wicked man as the coppersmith. The face of eternity and the nearness of eternity will do it. The face

of eternity and the nearness of eternity, and the face and the nearness of the Lord of eternity, that will do it.

Whether, then, this is some corruption in the text, as the scholars call corruption; or some of the remaining corruption in Paul's heart, as he would have called it himself, I do not know. But this I know, that it is the essence, and the concentration, and the core, of all corruption in my heart, when I again detect myself hating this man and that man for the love of God. Long after I am able to forgive this man and that man for what he has said or done against myself, I am compelled to cry out, O wretched man that I am! as often as I despise, or detest, or desire to hear of hurt to Alexander or to any of his widespread seed. I must not even let myself say, Vengeance is mine, I will repay, saith the Lord. No, I must rather say, 'Let thy vengeance fall on me rather. For I have been a disappointment to Alexander's ambition. I have been a provocation to him and an offence to him in many ways. He has stumbled and has been broken on me. I am not without blame in his shipwreck of faith and a good conscience.' Instead of cursing Alexander to God, William Law would the more have prayed for him late every night, according to that great man's life-long practice—'if you pray for a man sufficiently often, and sufficiently fervently, and sufficiently in secret, you cannot but love that man, even were he Alexander the coppersmith.' That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven; for He maketh His sun to rise on the evil and on the

good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust.

But all questions of corruptions in the text, and in Paul's heart, apart, let us part with Paul when he is indisputably at his very highest and his very best. And he is at his very highest and his very best in the very next verse to his two unhappy verses about Alexander. "At my first answer no man stood with me, but all men forsook me: I pray God that it may not be laid to their charge." Paul is at his very best in that; for it is not Paul at all who says that, but it is He speaking in Paul who, when He also was forsaken, said, "Father, forgive them." "I am crucified with Christ," says Paul when he is at his best. "Nevertheless I live: yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: liveth in me and forgiveth Alexander the coppersmith in me: and the life I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me."

CVII

PAUL AS A STUDENT

PAUL was not born in the Holy Land like Jesus Christ, and like Peter and James and John. But Paul was proud of his birthplace, as he might very well be. For Tarsus was a great city in a day of great cities. Athens was a great city, Corinth was a great city, and Ephesus was a great city. But Tarsus in some respects was a greater city than any of them. Jerusalem stood alone, and Rome stood alone; but Tarsus engraved herself on her coins as the Metropolis of the East, and her proud claim was not disputed. An immense industry was carried on in the workshops of Tarsus, and an immense import and export trade was carried on in her docks. Nor were the eminent men of Tarsus mere manufacturers and merchants; they were men of education and refinement of manners also. But Saul's father was not one of the eminent men of Tarsus. He was one of the Hebrew dispersion, and he was making his living by the sweat of his brow in that industrious Greek city. And thus it was that

Saul his son was far better acquainted with the workshops of Tarsus than with its schools or its colleges. Saul of Tarsus was not born with the silver spoon in his mouth any more than was Jesus of Nazareth, his future Master. It was one of the remarkable laws of that remarkable people that every father was expected, was compelled indeed, to send his son first to a school and then to a workshop. Rich and poor sat on the same school-seat; and rich and poor alike went from school to learn an honest trade. Rabbi Joseph turned the mill. Rabbi Juda was a baker. Rabbi Ada and Rabbi Jose were fishermen; and, may we not add, Rabbi Peter and Rabbi John? And so on: woodcutters, leatherdressers, blacksmiths, carpenters. And thus it was that Paul, again and again, held up his hands in the pulpit, and at the prisoner's bar, and said, 'These hands, as you see, are full of callosities and scars, because they have all along ministered to mine own necessities, and to the necessities of those who have been dependent on me.'

Saul of Tarsus, like Timothy of Lystra, from a child knew the Holy Scriptures. And thus, no doubt, there was found among his old parchments after his death a Table of Rules and Regulations for his college conduct in Jerusalem, as good as William Law's Rules for his college conduct in Cambridge; better Rules they could not be. But there is one possibility in Saul's student days in Jerusalem that makes our hearts beat fast in our bosoms to think of it. "And the Child grew,"

we read in a contemporary biography, "and waxed strong in spirit, filled with wisdom; and the grace of God was upon Him. Now His parents went up to Jerusalem every year at the feast of the passover. And when He was twelve years old, they went up to Jerusalem after the custom of the feast. And it came to pass after three days they found Him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the doctors, both hearing them and asking them questions." Now Gamaliel would be almost sure to be one of those astonished doctors; and what more likely than that he had taken his best scholar up to the temple to explain the passover to him that day? And did not the young carpenter from Nazareth, and the young weaver from Tarsus, exchange glances of sympathy and shake hands of love that day at the gate of the temple? I, for one, will believe that they did. Are there sports of providence like that in the Divine Mind? asked one of his like-minded students at Rabbi Duncan one day. Yes, and No, was the wise old doctor's answer.

Now the first instruction, as I think, intended to us out of Saul's student days is this—that the finest minds in every generation should study for the Christian ministry. Perhaps the very finest mind that had been born among men since the beginning of the world entered on the study of Old Testament theology when Saul of Tarsus sat down at Gamaliel's feet. And all Saul's fine and fast maturing mind will soon be needed now. For a work lay before that weaver boy of Tarsus second only to the work

that lay before that carpenter boy of Nazareth, though second to that by an infinite interval. At the same time, there has been no other work predestinated to mere mortal man to do for God and man to be spoken of in the same day with this weaver boy's fore-ordained work. For even after the Lamb of God had said of His work,—it is finished! how unfinished and incomplete our New Testament would have been without the life and the work of the Apostle Paul. There was a deep harmony pre-established from all eternity between the work of Jesus Christ, and the mind and heart of Paul His apostle. No other subject in all the world but the Divine Person and the redeeming work of Jesus Christ could have afforded an outlet and an opportunity and an adequate scope for Paul's magnificent mind. While, on the other hand, the law of God and the cross of Christ would have remained to this day but half-revealed mysteries, had it not been for God's revelation of His Son in Paul; and had it not been for Paul's intellectual and spiritual capacity to receive that revelation, and to expound it and preach it. Every man who has read Paul's Epistles with the eyes of his understanding in light, and with his heart on fire, must have continually exclaimed, What a gift to a man is a fine mind, and that mind wholly given up to Jesus Christ! Let our finest minds, then, devote themselves to the study of Christology. Other subjects may, or may not, be exhausted; other callings may, or may not, be overcrowded; but there is plenty of room in the topmost calling

of all, and there is an ever-opening and an ever-deepening interest there. No wonder, then, that it has been a University tradition in Scotland that our finest minds have all along entered the Divinity Hall. The other walks and callings of human life both need, and will reward, the best minds that can be spared to them, but let the service of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ first be filled. To annotate the Iliad, or the Symposium, or the Commedia; to build up and administer an empire; to command in a battle for freedom by sea or by land; to create and bequeath a great and enriching business; to conduct an influential newspaper; to be the rector of a great school, and so on,—these are all great services done to our generation when we have the talent, and the character, and the opportunity, to do them. But to master Paul, as Paul mastered Moses and Christ; to annotate, and illustrate, and bring freshly home to ten thousand readers, the Galatians, or the Romans, or the Colossians; to have eyes to see what Israel ought to do, and to have the patience, and the courage, to lead a church to do it; to feed, and to feed better and better for a lifetime, the mind and the heart of a congregation of God's people, and then to depart to be with Christ,—let the finest minds and the deepest and richest hearts in every new generation fall down while they are yet young and say, Lord Jesus, what wilt Thou have me to do with my life, and with whatsoever talents Thou hast intrusted to me?

And, then, the best of all callings being chosen, the better his mind and the better his heart are, the more profit, to employ Paul's own word about himself, will be made by the true student. For one thing, the better his mind, the more industrious, as a rule, the student of divinity will be. And the absolutely utmost industry in this supreme department of study is simply imperative and indispensable. An unindustrious divinity student should be drummed out of the Hall as soon as he is discovered intruding himself into it. With what a hunger for his books, and with what heavenward vows and oaths of work, young Saul would set out from Tarsus to Jerusalem! Our own best students come up to our divinity seats with thrilling and thanksgiving hearts, and it is only they who have such hearts who can at all enter into Saul's mind and heart and imagination as he descended Olivet and entered Jerusalem and saw his name set down at last on Gamaliel's roll of the sons of the prophets. Gamaliel would have no trouble with Saul, unless it was to supply him with books, and to answer his questions. 'In all my experience I never had a scholar like Saul of Tarsus,' Gamaliel would often afterwards say. And Saul's class-fellows would tell all their days what a help and what a protection it was to be beside Saul. "We entered the regent's class that year," writes James Melville in his delightful Diary, "and he took up Aristotle's *Logic* with us. He had a little boy that served him in his chambers, called David Elistone, who, among thirty-six scholars, so

many were we in the class, was by far the best. This boy he caused to wait on me and confer with me, and well it was for me, for his genius and his judgment passed mine as far as the eagle the owlet. In the multiplication of propositions, in the conversion of syllogisms, in the *pons asinorum*, etc., he was as well read as I was in counting my fingers. This, I mark as a special cause of thankfulness." And young Saul of Tarsus would be just another David Elistone in Gamaliel's school. And you Edinburgh students of divinity must be as industrious and as successful as ever Saul was in Jerusalem, or little Elistone in St. Andrews. And you have far more reason. For you have far better teachers, and a far better subject, and a far better prospect, than ever Saul had. You are not eternally fore-ordained, indeed, to write the Epistle to the Romans, or the Epistle to the Ephesians. But you are chosen, and called, and matriculated, to do the next best thing to that. You are called to master those masterpieces of Paul, so as to live experimentally upon them all your student life, and then you are to teach and preach them to your people better and better all your pulpit and pastoral life. You are to work with your hands, if need be; you are to sell your bed, if need be, as Coleridge commands you, in order to buy Calvin on the Romans, and Luther on the Galatians, and Goodwin on the Ephesians, and Davenant on the Colossians, and Hooker on Justification, and "that last word on the subject," Marshall's *Gospel Mystery of Sanctification*; and

you are to husband-up your priceless and irrecoverable hours to such studies, as you shall give account at the day of a divinity student's judgment. You are to feed your people, when you have got them committed of Christ to your charge, with the finest of the wheat, and with honey out of the rock. And that, better and better all your life, till your proud people shall make their boast in God about you, as the proud people of Anwoth made their boast about that great genius, and great scholar, and great theologian, and great preacher, and great pastor, Master Samuel Rutherford.

"Give attendance to reading," was Paul's old-age reminiscence of his student days, in the form of a counsel to young Timothy. "Paul has not lost his delight in books, even when he is near his death," says Calvin. And I myself owe so much to good books that I cannot stop myself on this subject as long as I see a single student sitting before me. I have a thousand times had Thomas Boston's experience of good books. "I plied my books. After earnestly plying my books, I felt my heart begin to grow better. I always find that my health and my heart are the better according as I ply my books." But you will correct me that Paul could not ply the great books that Thomas Boston plied to his own salvation, and to the salvation of his people in Simprin and Ettrick. Well, then, all the more, ply your pure Bible as Paul and Timothy did, and your profiting, like Paul's profiting and Timothy's, will soon appear unto all. Plying your English Bible even, your

profiting will soon appear in your English style, both spoken and written. It will appear in the scriptural stateliness and the holy order of your pulpit prayers also. Your profiting will appear also in the strength, and the depth, and the spirituality, and the experimentalness, and the perennial freshness, of your teaching and your preaching. "Paul knew his Old Testament so well," says Dean Farrar in his splendid *Life of St. Paul*, "that his sentences are constantly moulded by its rhythm, and his thoughts are incessantly coloured by its expressions."

But, all the time—and it startles and staggers us to hear it—Saul was living in ignorance and in unbelief. They are his own remorseful words, written by his own pen long afterwards—ignorance and unbelief. The finest of minds, the best of educations, sleepless industry, blameless life, and all: with all that, the aged apostle shudders to look back on his student-days of ignorance and unbelief. What in the world does he mean? Strange to say, and it is something for us all to think well about, he declares to us on every autobiographic page of his, that all the time he sat at Gamaliel's feet, and for many disastrous years after that, he was in the most absolute and woe-working ignorance of the law of God. But that only increases our utter amazement. For, was it not the law of God that Gamaliel had opened his school to teach? What in the world, I ask again, can Paul mean? Have you any idea what the apostle means when he says, with such life-long shame, and such life-long remorse, that all his

Jerusalem and Gamaliel days he was blind and dead in his ignorance of the law of God? It may, perhaps, help us to an understanding of what he means, if we try to mount up and to stand beside him on the far-shining heights of his exalted apostleship, and then look back from thence on his student and Pharisee days in Jerusalem. For it was just in the law of God that Paul afterwards became such a master. It was just the complete abolition of his ignorance of the law of God that set him so high above even the pillar-apostles in their remaining ignorance of it. It was just the law of God that he so reasoned out, and debated with them, as well as taught and preached it with such matchless success in every synagogue from Damascus to Rome. It was his incomparable handling of the law of God that first discovered to himself, and to the enraptured Church of Christ, the apostle's unique theological and philosophical genius, and the whole originality, and depth, and sweep, and grasp, of his matchless mind. An absolutely new world of things was opened up to the Apostolic Church when Paul came back from Arabia with the full revelation of the law and the gospel in his mind, and in his heart, and in his imagination. It was of Paul, and of the law of God in Paul's preaching, that our Lord spake when He said, "I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. Howbeit when He, the Spirit of truth, is come, He will guide you into all truth,"—which He did when He led Paul into Arabia. And then, after those three reading, meditating, praying, law-discovering,

self-discovering, Christ-discovering, years, Paul came back to Damascus, carrying in his mind and in his heart the copestone of New Testament doctrine, with shoutings of grace! grace! unto it. It was Paul's imperial mind, winged as it was with his wonderful imagination, that first swept, full of eyes, over the whole Old Testament history, and saw, down to the bottom and up to the top, the whole hidden mystery of the Old Testament economies, from the creation of the first Adam on to the sitting down of the second Adam at the right hand of God. From the creation of Adam to the call of Abraham; and from the call of Abraham to the giving of the law four hundred and thirty years after; and from the giving of the law till the law was magnified in the life and death of Paul's Master. "I first of all mortal men have thought the Creator's thoughts after Him," exclaimed the great astronomical discoverer as he fell on his knees in his observatory. And the great discoverer of the whole mystery of God, in the law and in the gospel, must often have fallen down and uttered the very same exclamation. And his great revelations, and discoveries, and attainments, and experiences, are preserved to us in such profound, axiomatic, and far-enlightening New Testament propositions and illustrations and autobiographic ejaculations as these,—"The law entered that the offence might abound. By the law is the knowledge of sin. The law worketh wrath. Without the law sin was dead. I was alive without the law once. I am sold under sin.

The law is our schoolmaster to lead us to Christ. By the works of the law shall no flesh be justified. But now we are no more under the law, but under grace. I am dead to the law, that being dead wherein I was held,"—and so on, through the whole of the Galatians and the Romans, and indeed throughout every Epistle of his. Yes, gentlemen, you may to-night be in as absolute ignorance of all that as the apostle once was; but, I tell you, there still lies scope and opportunity in all that for your most scholarly, most logical, and most philosophical, minds, and for your most eloquent, impressive, and prevailing preaching. Till you ascend for yourselves, and then lead your people up to this golden climax of the apostle concerning the law, and concerning Christ, and concerning himself in Christ—this golden climax—"For I through the law am dead to the law, that I might live unto God. I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me."

CVIII

PAUL APPREHENDED OF CHRIST JESUS

THE first time we see Saul of Tarsus he is silently consenting to Stephen's death. Why the fierce young Pharisee did not take a far more active part in the martyrdom of Stephen we do not know; we can only guess. That a young zealot of Saul's temperament should be content to sit still that day, and merely keep the clothes of the witnesses who stoned Stephen, makes us wonder what it meant. But, beginning with his silent consent to the death of Stephen, Saul soon went on to plan and to perpetrate the most dreadful deeds on his own account. "As for Saul, he made havoc of the Church, entering into every house, and haling men and women, committed them to prison. Which thing I also did in Jerusalem; and many of the saints did I shut up in prison, and punished them oft in every synagogue, and compelled them to blaspheme. Beyond measure I persecuted the Church of God, and wasted it; I was a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious." And thus it was that

Saul actually went to the high priest in Jerusalem, and desired of him letters to Damascus, to the synagogues, that if he found any of this way, whether they were men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem. And, accordingly, on that errand, out at the Damascus-gate of Jerusalem, he rode with his band of temple police behind him: out past Gethsemane: out past Calvary, where he shook his spear in the face of the Crucified, and cried, Aha, aha! Thou deceiver! and posted on breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord.

Gird Thy sword upon Thy thigh, O Most Mighty, with Thy glory and Thy majesty. Thine arrows are sharp in the hearts of the King's enemies, whereby the people fall under Thee!

And thus it was that, as Saul journeyed, and came near Damascus, suddenly there shone down upon him a great light from heaven. And he fell to the earth, and heard a voice saying to him, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou Me? His eyes were as a flame of fire, and His voice as the sound of many waters. And out of His mouth went a sharp two-edged sword, and His countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength. Arise, go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou shalt do. And Saul arose from the earth, and they led him by the hand, and brought him into Damascus. And he was three days without sight, and did neither eat nor drink. And Ananias entered the house where Saul lay, and putting his hands on him, he said, Brother Saul, the Lord, even Jesus,

that appeared unto thee on the way as thou camest, hath sent me, that thou mightest receive thy sight, and be filled with the Holy Ghost. And immediately there fell from his eyes, as if it had been scales, and he received sight forthwith, and arose, and was baptized. Saul of Tarsus, I baptize thee in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. And there was great joy in the presence of the angels of God over the conversion and the baptism of Saul of Tarsus.

Now it is the suddenness of Saul's conversion that is the first thing arresting about it to us. It was literally, and in his own words, an "apprehension." "Suddenly," is his own word about it, as often as he tells us again and again the ever-fresh story of his conversion. The whole subject of conversion is a great study to those who are personally interested in the supremest of all human experiences. There is such a Divine Hand in every conversion; there is such a Sovereignty in it; taking place within a man, there is, at the same time, such a mysteriousness about it; and, withal, such a transcendent importance, that there is nothing else that ever takes place on the face of the earth for one moment to be compared with a conversion. And, then, there are so many kinds of conversion. So many ways of it, and such different occasions and circumstances of it. Some conversions are as sudden, and as unexpected, and as complete, as Saul's conversion was; and some are slowness itself. Some are such that the

very moment, and the very spot, can ever afterwards be pointed out; while some other men are all their days subject to doubt, just because the change came so easy to them as to be without observation. They were born of the Spirit before they could distinguish good from evil, or could discern between their right hand and their left hand. A good sermon will be the occasion of one conversion, a good book of another, and a wise word spoken in due season of another. Hearing a hymn sung, as was the case one Sabbath evening in this very house; hearing a verse read, as was the case with St. Augustine. Just looking for a little at a dry tree will do it sometimes, as was the case with Brother Laurence. Hopeful saw Faithful burned to ashes; Christiana remembered all her surly carriages to her husband; and Mercy came just in time to see Christiana packing up. Their conversions came to Dr. Donne and to Dr. Chalmers long after they were ministers; and, after their almost too late conversion, those two great men became the greatest preachers of their day. A man of business will be on his way to his office on a Monday morning, and he could let you see to this day the very shop window, passing which, in Princes Street, he was apprehended. I was engaged to be married and she died, said a young communicant to me on one occasion. It was the unkindness of my mistress, said a servant-girl. Just as I am writing these lines this letter reaches me: "When the Lord opened my eyes the sight I saw broke me down completely. I tried to work

myself right, till it turned out to be the hardest task I ever tried. But I would not give in till He took me by the coat-neck and held me over hell. Oh, sir, it was a terrible time! My sense of sin drove me half mad. But I kept pouring out my heart in prayer!" And then my correspondent goes on to tell me the name of the book that was made such a blessing to him. And then he asks that his mistakes in spelling be pardoned, and signs himself an office-bearer in the Church of one of my friends. But you will go over for yourselves all the cases of conversion you have ever heard about, or read about, and you will see for yourselves how full of all kinds of individuality, and variety, and intensity of interest, the work of conversion is, till like Mercy in *The Pilgrim's Progress*, you will fall in love with your own.

Some men put off their conversion because they have no sense of sin. But look at Saul. What sense of sin had he? Not one atom. He was an old and a heaven-ripe apostle before his full sense of sin came home to him. He was not groaning out the seventh of the Romans when he was galloping at the top of his speed on his way to Damascus. A sensibility to sin so exquisite and so spiritual as that of the apostle never yet came to any man but after long long years of the holiest of lives. To ninety-nine out of a hundred, even of truly converted men, it never comes at all. How could it? At the same time, who knows? your conversion, both in its present

insensibility, and in its subsequent spirituality, may be to be of the same kind as Paul's was, if you will only on the spot submit to it. Accept your offered conversion, and go home and act at once and ever after upon it, and trust the Holy Ghost for your sense of sin. And if you belong to the same mental and moral and spiritual seed of Israel as Paul, your sense of sin will yet come to you with a vengeance. And, once it begins to come, it will never cease coming more and more, till you will almost be driven beside yourself with it. On the other hand, your conversion may not be to be of the heart-breaking kind. You may not be to be held over open hell by the coat-neck like my ill-spelling friend; your experience may be to be like that of Lydia. Like hers, your conversion may be to steal in upon your heart some night at a prayer-meeting,—be it of whatever kind it is to be, take it when and where it is offered to you. And if your conversion is of the right kind at all, and holds, you will in due time and in your due order, get your fit and proper share of that saving grace, of which you say you are so utterly empty to-night.

But not only had Saul no sense of sin to prepare him for his conversion: he had no preparation and no fitness for his conversion, of any kind whatsoever. He brought nothing in his hands. He came just as he was. He was without one plea. Poor, wretched, blind; sight, riches, healing of the mind. Read his thrice-told story, and see if there is any lesson plainer, or more pointed

to you in it all, than just the unexpectedness, the unpreparedness, and the completeness on the spot, of Saul's conversion. With, on the other hand, his instantaneous and full faith, his childlike trust, his full assurance, and his prompt and unquestioning obedience. Yes, it is just the absolute sovereignty, startling suddenness, total unpreparedness, entire undeservingness, and glorious completeness, of Saul's conversion that, all taken together, make it such a study, and, in some respects, such a model conversion, to you and to me.

There is another lesson told us three times, as if to make sure that we shall not miss nor mistake it. Saul got his conversion out of that overthrow on the way to Damascus, while all his companions only got some bodily bruises from their fall, and the complete upsetting of their errand out of it. The temple officers had each his own story to tell when they returned without any prisoners to Jerusalem: only, none of them needed to be led by the hand into Damascus, and none of them were baptized by Ananias, but Saul only. All of which is written for our learning. For the very same thing will take place here to-night. One will be Saul over again, and those who are sitting beside him will be Saul's companions over again. One will go straight home after this service, and will never all his days have Saul's sudden and unexpected conversion out of his mind, such a divine pattern is it to be of his own conversion. While his companions will be able to

tell when they go home who preached, and on what, the fulness of the Church, the excellence of the music, and the state of the weather on the way home—and that will be all. "And they that were with me saw indeed the light, and were afraid; but they heard not the voice of Him that spake with me. And I said, What shall I do, Lord? And He said to me, Arise, and go into the city, and there it shall be told thee of all things which are appointed for thee to do."

'It is a trap set for us,' said Ananias. 'Lord,' he said, 'I have heard by many of this man, how much evil he hath done to Thy saints in Jerusalem. And how he has come here with authority to bind all that call upon Thy name. It is a trap set for our destruction,' said Ananias. 'Go to the street called Straight,' said the Lord, 'and if thou dost not find him in prayer, then it is a trap as thou fearest it is.' The mark of Saul's conversion that silenced Ananias was this, that Saul had been three days and three nights in fasting and in prayer without ceasing. Behold he prayeth, said Christ, proud of the completeness and the success of His conversion of Saul. Has Jesus Christ, with His eyes like a flame of fire, set that secret mark on your conversion and on mine? Does He point you out to His ministering angels and sympathising saints in heaven to-night, as He pointed out Saul to Ananias? How does your conversion stand the test of secret prayer? Behold, he prayeth! said

Christ. And unceasing prayer, both for himself and for all his converts, remained to be Paul's mark, and token, and seal, down to the end of his days.

The best expositor by far that ever took Paul's epistles up into a pulpit, has said that the apostle never fell into a single inconsistency after his conversion. Now, with all submission, I cannot receive that even about Paul, any more than I can receive it about any other man that ever was converted on the face of this earth. That he never fell into a single inconsistency could only be said about One Man; and we never speak about His conversion. But the very fact that the profoundest preacher that I possess on Paul, and the profoundest preacher of conversion-consistency, has said such a thing as that, shows us what a splendid, what a complete, and what a consistent, conversion Paul's conversion must have been. How thoroughgoing it must have been at the time; and how holy in all manner of walk and conversation must Paul ever after have lived. Speaking here for myself, and not venturing to speak for any of you, when I read a thing like that, and a thing said by such a master in Israel as he was who said that, and then look at my own life in the searching light of that, I feel as if I can never up till now have been converted myself at all. Unless this also is a sure mark of a true conversion, which I have seen set down with incomparable power by this very same master in Israel, this,—that it is a sure and certain mark of a true conversion that no man ever

understands what inconsistency really is till he is truly converted. To be all but entirely void of offence, as Paul said of himself; to be all but completely consistent in everything, was one of the sure and certain marks of Paul's conversion. But, then, to feel myself to be full to the lips of offence: to see and to feel myself to be the most inconsistent man in all the world, is, by this same high authority, offered to me as a mark of my conversion, as good to me as Paul's magnificent marks were to him. "The disproportion of man" is one of Pascal's most prostrating passages; and the offensiveness, the inconsistency, and the disproportion, of my heart and my life, are the most prostrating of all my experiences. Indeed, nothing ever prostrates me, to be called prostration, but these experiences. At the same time, the whole and entire truth at its deepest bottom is this. That both things are true of Paul and of his conversion. Paul was at one and the same moment, and in one and the same matter, both the most consistent, and the most inconsistent, of all Christ's converts. He was both the most blameless, and the most blameable; the best proportioned, and the most disproportioned, of all Christian men. Such was the holiness of his life, and such was the spirituality of his mind and heart. And both experiences, taken together, combine to constitute the most complete and all-round mark of a perfect conversion. Now, all that, and far more than all that, combine to make Paul's conversion the most momentous, and the most wonderful, conversion in

all the world. And yet, no. There is one other conversion long since Paul's, that will, to you and to me to all eternity, quite eclipse Paul's conversion, and will for ever completely cast, even it, quite into the shade.

CIX

PAUL IN ARABIA

NO sooner was Paul baptized by Ananias, than, instead of returning home to Jerusalem, he immediately set out for Arabia. He had come down to Damascus with horses and servants like a prince, but he set out alone for Arabia like Jacob with his staff. For, all that he took with him was his parchments, and some purchases he had made in the street called Straight. A few of those simple instruments that tentmakers use when they have to minister to their own necessities, was all that Paul encumbered himself with as he started from Ananias's door on his long and solitary journey to Arabia.

What it was that took Paul so immediately and so far away as Arabia, we can only guess. If it was simply a complete seclusion that he was in search of, he might surely have secured that seclusion much nearer home. But, somehow, Sinai seems to have drawn Paul to her awful solitudes with an irresistible attraction and strength. It may have been an old desire of his formed at

Gamaliel's feet, some day to see the Mount of God with his own eyes. He may have said to himself that he must hide himself for once in that cleft-rock before he sat down to his life-work in Moses' seat. I must see Rome, he said towards the end of his life. I must see Sinai, he also said at the beginning of his life. And thus it was that as soon as he was baptized in Ananias's house in Damascus, Paul immediately set out for Arabia.

Look at that weak bodily presence. But, at the same time, judge him not by his outward appearance. For he carries Augustine, and Luther, and Calvin, and Knox, in his fruitful loins. In that lonely stranger you are now looking at, and in his seed, shall all the families of the earth be blessed. Look at the eyes of his understanding as they begin to be enlightened. Look at him with his heart all on fire. See him as he unrolls his parchments at every roadside well, and drinks of the brook by the way. Thy word is more to me than my necessary food, and thy love is better than wine!

What a three years were those three years that Paul spent in Arabia! Never did any other lord receive his own again with such usury as when Paul went into Arabia with Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms in his knapsack, and returned to Damascus with the Romans and the Ephesians and the Colossians in his mouth and in his heart. What an incomparable book waits to be written about those three immortal years in Arabia! After those thirty preparation-years at Nazareth, there is

no other opportunity left for any sanctified pen, like those three revelation-years in Arabia. Only, it will demand all that is within the most Paul-like writer, to fit him out for his splendid enterprise. It will demand, and it will repay, all his learning, and all his intellect, and all his imagination, and all his sinfulness, and all his salvation. Just to give us a single Sabbath out of Paul's hundred and fifty Sabbaths at Sinai—what a revelation to us that would be! It would be something like this, only a thousand times better. When first you fell in love: when first your captivated heart made you like the chariots of Ammi-nadib; the whole world was full of one name to you. There was no other name to you in all the world. Every bird sang that name. Every rock echoed with that name. You wrote that name everywhere. You read that name everywhere. You loved everybody and everything for the sake of that name. Now, it was something like that between Paul and Jesus Christ. Only, it was far better than that between Paul and Jesus Christ at the time, and it was far more lasting with them than it has been with you. Luther, who was almost as great a lover of Jesus Christ as Paul was, has this over and over again about Paul and Jesus Christ. "Jesus Christ is never out of Paul's mouth. Indeed, there is nobody and nothing now and always in Paul's mouth but Jesus Christ and His Cross." Now that is literally true. For, as often as Paul opens his Moses in Arabia, and finds the place he is seeking for, he cannot see the place when he has found it for Jesus Christ.

Jesus Christ comes between Paul and everything. To Paul to read, and to meditate, and to pray, is Jesus Christ. So much so, that as soon as he finds the place at the very first verse of Genesis, he immediately goes off at the word, and exclaims, till the Arabs all around listen to his rapture,—the mystery! he exclaims, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ. And at this,—Let there be light! For God, he exclaims again, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts in the face of Jesus Christ. And, does Adam burst out into his bridegroom doxology,—This is now bone of my bone, and flesh of my flesh!—than Paul instantly adds, Amen! But I speak concerning Christ and His Church. And before he leaves the first Adam he gets such a revelation of the second Adam made in him that the Corinthians had many a glorious Sabbath morning on the two Adams, all the way from Arabia, long afterwards. And, again, no sooner does God speak in covenant to Abraham about his seed, than Paul immediately annotates that He saith not to seeds as of many, but as of One, which is Christ. But, on all that Moses ever wrote, there was nothing that Paul spent so much time and strength, as just on this concerning the father of the faithful,—that Abraham believed in the Lord, and it was counted to him for righteousness. Now, said Paul, reasoning to himself over that revelation, and then reasoning to us,—Now it was not written for Abraham's sake only, that it was

imputed to him, but for our sakes also, to whom it shall be imputed, if we believe on Him who raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead; who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification. And so on, till to have spent a single Sabbath-day with Paul at Sinai would have been almost as good as to have walked that evening hour to Emmaus. So did Paul discover the Son of God in Arabia: so did Paul have the Son of God revealed to him in Adam, and in Abraham, and in Moses, and in David, and in Isaiah, but, best of all, in Paul himself.

And, then, Paul's first fast-day in Arabia. Paul was never out of the Psalms on those days that he observed so solemnly at Sinai. Till his David was like John Bunyan's Luther, so old that it was ready to fall piece from piece if he did but turn it over. But he always turned it over at such sacramental seasons till he came again to that great self-examination Psalm, where he found it written concerning himself: These things hast thou done, and I kept silence. Thou thoughtest that I was altogether such an one as thyself. But I will reprove thee, and set them in order before thee. And it was so. For, there they stood, set in order before him, and passed in order before him and before God. The souls of all the men and women and children he had haled to prison, and had compelled to blaspheme, and had slain with the sword. And, then, as he hid himself in the cleft rock—how the Name of the Lord would come up into his mind: and how, like Moses also, he would make haste and

bow his head to the earth and say: Take me for one of Thy people. And, till God would again reveal His Son in Paul in a way, and to a degree, that it is not possible for Paul to tell to such impenitent and unprostrated readers of his as we are. And, then, far over and above those terrible sins of his youth, there was the absolutely unparalleled and absolutely indescribable agony that came upon Paul out of the remaining covetousness and consequent malice of his heart, and more and more so as his heart was more and more brought down under the ever-increasing and all-piercing spirituality of God's holy law. An agony that sometimes threatened to drive Paul beside himself altogether. And till, on the rocks of Sinai the shepherds would sometimes come on somewhat the same sweat of blood that the gardeners came on in the Garden of Gethsemane. For it was in Arabia, and it was under the Mount of God, that Paul's apostolic ink-horn was first filled with that ink of God with which he long afterwards wrote that so little understood writing of his, which we call the Seventh of the Romans. A little understood writing; and no wonder!

The Apostle came back from Arabia to Damascus, after three years' absence, absolutely ladened down with all manner of doctrines, and directions, and examples, for us and for our salvation, if we would only attend to them and receive them. Directions and examples of which this is one of the first. That solitude, the most complete and not short solitude, was the one

thing that Paul determined to secure for himself immediately after his conversion and his baptism. And we have a still better Example of all that than even Paul. For, over and above His thirty uninvaded years, no sooner was that "Glorious Eremite" baptized, than He went away and took forty days to Himself before He began His public life. "One day"—sings concerning Him one of His servants who loved seclusion also, and put it to some purpose—

> "One day forth walked alone, the Spirit leading,
> And His deep thoughts, the better to converse
> With solitude; till far from track of man,
> Thought following thought, and step on step led on,
> He entered now the bordering desert-wild,
> And, with dark shades and rocks environ'd round,
> His holy meditations thus pursued."

And thus it is that Holy Scripture is everywhere so full of apartness and aloneness and solitude: of lodges in the wilderness, and of shut doors in the city: of early mornings, and late nights, and lonely night-watches: of Sabbath-days and holidays, and all such asylums of spiritual retreat.

> Down to Gehenna, and up to the throne,
> He travels the fastest who travels alone.

But the Apostle's chief reason for telling us about Arabia at all is this, to prove to us, and to impress upon us, that it was not cities and colleges and books that made him what by that

time he was made. It was God Himself who made Paul the Apostle he was made. I conferred not with flesh and blood, he protests. He had books, indeed, as we have seen: he always had. He had the best of books: he always had. But even Moses and David and Isaiah themselves are but flesh and blood compared with God. Even grace itself is but flesh and blood compared with Christ, says Thomas Shepard. And Paul is careful and exact, above everything, to make it clear to us, that not only was it God Himself who immediately and conclusively revealed His Son in Paul; but, also, that it was His Son that God so revealed. It was not Jesus Christ, so much, distinguishes Paul, that God revealed in him. Jesus Christ had revealed Himself to Paul already at the gate of Damascus, but God's revelation of His Son in Arabia was a revelation of far more than of Jesus Christ whom Paul was persecuting. For, this in Arabia is God's Eternal and Co-Equal Son. And that, not merely as made flesh, and made sin: not merely as crucified, and risen, and exalted, and glorified; but as He had been before all that, and during all that, and after all that. It was God's Essential and Eternal Son: it was God's very deepest, completest, and most crowning revelation possible of His only-begotten Son; that God, in such grace and truth, made in Paul in Arabia.

In me, says Paul. In my deepest mind and in my deepest heart: in my very innermost soul and strength. And thus it was that Paul under-

went two grand revelations, over and above a multitude of lesser revelations which arose out of those two epoch-making revelations, and which both perfected and applied them. The one, that grand and epoch-making revelation made on the way to Damascus, and made immediately by Jesus Christ, whom Paul was at that moment persecuting. A revelation divinely suited to all the circumstances. A revelation outward, arresting, overpowering: taking possession of all the persecutor's bodily senses, and thus surrounding and seizing all the passes into his soul. The other, made within and upon Paul's pure and naked soul, and apart altogether from the employment of his senses upon his soul. A revelation impossible adequately to describe. A revelation made by God of His Son, most inward, most profound, most penetrating, most soul-possessing: most-enlarging to the soul, most uplifting, and most upholding: most assuring, most satisfying, most sanctifying: intellectual, spiritual, experimental, evangelical: all-renewing and all-transforming: full of truth, full of love, full of assurance, full of holiness, full of the peace of God, which passeth all understanding. Jesus of Nazareth appeared *to* Saul the persecutor, as He had already appeared to Mary Magdalene, and to the ten disciples, and to Thomas. But God the Father revealed His Son *in* Paul the Apostle, as He had never revealed Him before, and as He has never revealed Him since in mortal man. That is to say, with a fulness, and with a finalness, that has made all God's subsequent revelations of

His Son, at their best, to be but superficial and partial, occasional and intermittent. Not that it need be so. Not that it ought to be so. For if we but gave ourselves up to God and to His Son, as Paul gave himself up, we also, no doubt, would soon reap our reward. But, as it is, Paul's apprehension of God's Son, Paul's comprehension of God's Son, and Paul's service of God's Son, have remained to this day, by far the first, by far the best, by far the most complete, by far the most final, and by far the most fruitful, revelation of His Son, that Almighty God has ever made in any of the sons of men.

CX

PAUL'S VISIT TO JERUSALEM TO SEE PETER

PUT yourself back into Paul's place. Suppose yourself born in Tarsus, brought up at Gamaliel's feet in Jerusalem, and keeping the clothes of Stephen's executioners. Think of yourself as a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious. And—then imagine yourself apprehended of Christ Jesus, driven of the Spirit into the wilderness of Arabia, and coming back with all your bones burning within you to preach Jesus Christ and Him crucified. But, all the time, you have never once seen your Master in the flesh, as His twelve disciples had seen Him. He had been for thirty years with His mother and His sisters and His brethren in Galilee. And then He had been for three years with the twelve and the seventy. But Paul had been born out of due time. And thus it was that Paul went up to Jerusalem to see Peter about all that. Paul had a great desire to see Peter about all that before

he began his ministry. And you would have had that same great desire, and so would I.

At the same time, even with the prospect of seeing Peter, it must have taken no little courage on Paul's part to face Judea and Jerusalem again. To face the widows and the orphans of the men he had put to death in the days of his ignorance and unbelief. To Paul the very streets of Jerusalem were still wet with that innocent blood. Led in by Peter Paul sat at the same Lord's table, and ate the same bread, and drank the same wine, with both old and young communicants, who had not yet put off their garments of mourning because of Paul. Deliver me from blood-guiltiness, O God, Thou God of my salvation. Then will I teach transgressors Thy ways. Do good in Thy good pleasure unto Zion; build Thou the walls of Jerusalem. And thus it was that, to the end of his days, Paul was always making collections for those same poor saints that were in Jerusalem. Paul would have pensioned every one of them out of his own pocket, had he been able. But how could he do that off a needle and a pair of shears? And thus it was that he begged so incessantly for the fatherless families that he had made fatherless in Judea and in Jerusalem. Now, if any of you have ever made any woman a widow, or any child an orphan, or done anything of that remorseful kind, do not flee the country. You cannot do it, and you need not try. Remain where you are. Go back to the place. Go back often in imagination, if not in your bodily

presence. Do the very utmost that in you lies, to repair the irreparable wrong that you did long ago. And, when you cannot redeem that dreadful damage, commit it to Him who can redeem both it and you. And say to Him continually:—Count me a partner with Thee. And put that also down to my account.

"To see Peter," our Authorised Version is made to say. "To visit Peter," the Revised Version is made to say. And, still, to help out all that acknowledged lameness, the revised margin is made to say, "to become acquainted with Peter." But Paul would not have gone so far, at that time at any rate, to see Peter or any one else. Any one else, but Peter's Master. But to see Him even once, as He was in the flesh, Paul would have gone from Damascus to Jerusalem on his hands and his knees. "I went up to Jerusalem to *history* Peter," is what Paul really says. Only, that is not good English. But far better bad English, than an utterly meaningless translation of such a text. "To interview Peter," is not good English either, but it conveys Paul's meaning exactly. The great Greek historians employ Paul's very identical word when they tell their readers the pains they took to get first-hand information before they began to write their books. "I went up to interrogate and to cross-question Peter all about our Lord," that would be rough English indeed, but it would be far better than so feebly to say, "to see Peter," which positively hides from his readers what was Paul's real errand to Jerusalem, and to Peter.

Had Landor been led to turn his fine dramatic genius and his ripe scholarship to Scriptural subjects, he would, to a certainty, have given us the conversations that took place for fifteen days between Peter and Paul. Landor's Epictetus and Seneca, his Diogenes and Plato, his Melanchthon and Calvin, his Galileo and Milton and a Dominican, and his Dante and Beatrice, are all among his masterpieces. But his Paul and Peter, and his Paul and James the brother of our Lord, and especially his Paul and the mother of our Lord, would have eclipsed clean out of sight his most classical compositions. For, on no possible subject, was Peter so ready always to speak, to all comers, as just about his Master. And never before nor since had Peter such a hungry hearer as just his present visitor and interrogator from Arabia and Damascus. Peter began by telling Paul all about that day when his brother Andrew so burst in upon him about the Messiah. And then that day only second to it, on the Lake of Gennesaret. And then Matthew the publican's feast, and so on, till Peter soon saw what it was that Paul had come so far to hear. And then he went on with the good Samaritan, and the lost piece of silver, and the lost sheep, and the lost son. For fifteen days and fifteen nights this went on till the two prostrate men took their shoes off their feet when they entered the Garden of Gethsemane. And both at the cock-crowing, and at Calvary, Peter and Paul wept so sore that Mary herself, and Mary Magdalene, did not weep like it. Now, just trust

me and tell me what you would have asked at Peter about his Master. Would you have asked anything? How far would you go to-night to have an interview with Peter? Honestly, have you any curiosity at all about Jesus Christ, either as He is in heaven now, or as He was on earth then? Really and truly, do you ever think about Him, and imagine Him, and what He is saying and doing? Or are you like John Bunyan, who never thought whether there was a Christ or no? If you would tell me two or three of the questions you would have put to Peter, I would tell you in return just who and what you are; just how you stand to-night to Jesus Christ, and how He stands to you: and what He thinks and says about you, and intends toward you.

And then if Mary, the mother of our Lord, was still in this world, it is certain to me that Paul both saw her in James's house, and kissed her hand, and called her Blessed. You may depend upon it that Mary did not remain very long away from James's house after his conversion. It was all very good to have a lodging with the disciple whom Jesus loved, till her own slow-hearted son believed. But I put it to you who are mothers in Israel, to put yourselves in Mary's place in those days, and to say if you would have been to be found anywhere, by that time, but in the house of your own believing son. And what more sure and certain than that God, here again, revealed His Son to Paul out of Mary's long hidden heart. 'I have the most perfect, and at first-hand, assurance of all

these things from them that were eye-witnesses and ministers of the Word,' says Paul's physician and private secretary. Nowhere, at any rate, in the whole world, could that miraculous and mystery-laden woman have found such another heart as Paul's into which to pour out all that had been for so long sealed up in her hidden heart. 'Whether we were in the body, or out of the body, as she told me about Nazareth, and as I told her about Damascus and Arabia, I cannot tell: God knoweth.'

"From the Old Testament point of view," says Bengel in his own striking and suggestive way, "the progress is made from the knowledge of Christ to the knowledge of Jesus. From the New Testament point of view, the progress is made from the knowledge of Jesus to the knowledge of Christ." And have we not ourselves already seen how Paul's progress was made? Paul's progress was made from the knowledge of Jesus of Nazareth risen from the dead, to the knowledge of the Son of God; and then from the knowledge of both back to the knowledge of the Holy Child Jesus, and the Holy Man Jesus, as He was known to His mother, to James His brother, and to Peter His so intimate disciple. Paul went "back to Jesus," as the saying sometimes is; but when he went back he took back with him all the knowledge of the Son of God that he has put into his Epistles, ay, and much more than the readers of his Epistles were able to receive. And God's way with Paul is His best way with us also. You will never read

the four Gospels with true intellectual understanding, and with true spiritual appreciation, till you have first read and understood and appreciated Paul's Epistles. But after you have had God's Son revealed in you by means of Paul's Epistles, you will then be prepared for all that Matthew and Mark and Luke and John have to tell you about the Word made flesh in their day. Paul's hand holds the true key to all the mysteries that are hid in the Prophets and in the Psalms and in the Gospels. Take back Paul with you, and all the prophecies and all the types of the Old Testament, and all the wonderful works of God in the New Testament, —His Son's sinless conception, His miracles, His teaching and preaching, His agony in the garden, His death on the Cross, and His resurrection and ascension,—will all fall into their natural and necessary places. It is in the very same order in which the great things of God were revealed to Paul, and apprehended by Paul, that they will best be revealed to us, and best apprehended by us. First our conversion; and then the Pauline, Patristic, and Puritan doctrine of the Son of God; and then all that taken back by us to the earthly life of our Blessed Lord as it is told to us by the four Evangelists. Damascus, Arabia, Jerusalem,—this, in our day also, is the God-guided progress, in which the true successors of the Apostle Paul are still travelling, in their spiritual experience, and in their evangelical scholarship.

CXI

PAUL AS A PREACHER

WHEN it pleased God to reveal the cross of Christ in Paul, from that day the cross of Christ was Paul's special, peculiar, and exclusive Gospel. The cross of Christ is "my gospel," Paul proudly and constantly claims, in the face of all comers. The cross of Christ, he declares, is the one and the only Gospel that he preaches, that he always preaches, and that he alone preaches. The cross of Christ was profitable to Paul for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, and for instruction in righteousness: and nothing else was of any real interest or any real profit to Paul. The cross of Christ was the alpha and the omega, the beginning, and the middle, and the end, of all Paul's preaching. Paul drew all his doctrines, and all his instructions, and all his reproofs, out of the cross of Christ. He drew his profound and poignant doctrines of the sinfulness of sin, and the consequent misery of man, out of the cross of Christ. He saw and he felt all that in himself, and in the whole world; but the cross

of Christ gave a new profundity, and a new poignancy, to all that to him. He drew his incomparably magnificent doctrines of the grace of God and the love of Christ out of the cross of Christ: those doctrines of his in the preaching of which he bursts out into such rapturous doxologies. The whole of the life of faith also, in all its manifoldness, and in all its universalness, and his own full assurance of everlasting life,—all that, and much more than all that, Paul, by his splendid genius, and it all so splendidly sanctified and inspired, drew out of the cross of Christ. Take away the cross of Christ from Paul, and he is as weak as any other man. Paul has nothing left to preach if you take away from him the cross of Christ. His mouth is shut. His pulpit is in ruins. His arm is broken. He is of all men most miserable. But let God reveal the cross of Christ in Paul, and, straightway, he can both do, and endure, all things. Paul is henceforth debtor both to the Greeks and to the Barbarians; both to the wise, and to the unwise. Once reveal the cross of Christ in Paul, and you thereby lay a life-long necessity upon him. Yea, woe is unto him, ever after, if he preaches not the Gospel of the cross of Christ.

We preach not ourselves, Paul asserts with a good conscience in another sermon of his. And yet, at the same time, he introduces himself into almost every sermon he preaches. Paul simply cannot preach the cross of Christ as he must preach it, without boldly bringing himself in, as both the best pattern and the best proof of what

the cross of Christ can do. Paul's salvation,—the absolute graciousness of Paul's salvation, and his absolute assurance of it,—these things are the infallible marks of their authenticity that Paul prints upon every Epistle of his. The cross of Christ, and Paul's salvation by that cross, are the two constant, and complementary, topics of Paul's pulpit; they are but the two sides of Paul's shield of salvation. The most beautiful English preacher of the past generation has told us that his conversion was so absorbing and so abiding that it made him rest ever after in the thought of two, and two only absolute and luminously self-evident beings, himself and his Creator. And so it was with Paul's conversion also. Only, in Paul's case it was not so much his Creator who was so luminously self-evident to Paul, it was much more his Redeemer. And thus it was that in Paul's preaching there were always present those two luminously self-evident subjects, Paul's sin and Christ's cross: Paul the chief of sinners, and Jesus Christ and Him crucified. And thus it is that Paul's so profound, and so experimental, preaching so satisfies us. And thus it is also that it alone satisfies us. When we are pining away under some secret disease if our physician comes and mocks at all our misery; if he treats our mortal wound as all imagination; if he rebukes and abuses us as if it were all so much melancholy, —our hearts know their own bitterness. But if we fall into the hands of a wise man and a sound and skilful physician, he at once takes in the whole

seriousness of our case. Before we have opened our mouth about ourselves, he has already laid his hand on our hurt, and has said to us,—Thou art ill to death indeed. Thy whole head is sick and thy whole heart faint. And already we feel that there is hope. At any rate, we are not to die under the folly of a charlatan. And Paul is the furthest of all our physicians from a charlatan. Paul rips open all the dark secrets of our consciences, and all the hidden rottennesses of our hearts, till he is the one preacher of all preachers for us. And his the Gospel of all Gospels. At any rate, speaking for myself, as often as my own sin and misery, impossible to be told, again close in upon me till my broken heart cries out, Oh, wretchedest of men that I am! Paul is instantly at my bedside with the cross of Christ, and with his own case told to me to fetch back my life to me. Paul's prescription, as the physicians call it, never fails me. Never. As often as seventy times seven, every mortal day of mine, the amazement and the misery of my sinfulness overwhelms me, Paul no sooner sets forth to me Jesus Christ and Him crucified, than a great light falls on my amazement, and a great alleviation on my misery. It is a dark light. It is a dreadful light. It is a light like a drawn sword. But it *is* light, where no other light from heaven, or from earth, could give a ray of light to me. At the cross, before the cross, under the cross, upon the cross, I am reconciled to God, and God is reconciled to me. I am reconciled to you also, and you to me. All

the hand-writings in heaven and earth and hell, that were so bitter against me, are all blotted out by His blood. All my injustices to you, all my injuries, all my animosities, antipathies, alienations, retaliations, distastes, and dislikes, all are rooted up out of my heart by the cross of Christ. For I am slain to myself because of the cross of Christ. The one and only cause of all my unspeakable sinfulness and misery,—myself; I, myself, am slain to death for ever by the cross of Christ. My self-love, my self-will, my self-seeking, my self-pleasing; they are all slain; or what is as good they have got their sure deathblow by the cross of Christ. I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me.

He alone is a "right divine" who can preach this faith of the Son of God properly, says Luther. He is a "right preacher" who can distinguish, first to himself, and then to his people, faith from the law, and grace from works, says the Reformer. Now Paul was a right divine and he was the first father and forerunner of all such. And never more so than when he is putting forth all his stupendous power to preach that divinest doctrine of his, that our best obedience, if offered in the very least measure for our salvation, is a complete abandonment, and a fatal denial of the cross of Christ. Some men will start up at that, and will protest at it, and debate against it.

So did Paul as long as he was still alive, and kept the clothes of them that stoned Stephen. And so did I for a long time. But now that greatest and best of all Paul's doctrines of grace, as often as I come on it in its bud in Abraham, and in its full flower and fruit in Paul and in Luther, it makes my heart to sing and dance within me. And it comes to me from the God of my salvation a thousand times every day. Why was that blessed doctrine so long in being preached by some right divine to me? Why was I, myself, so long in learning and in preaching this first principle of the doctrine of Christ? And why do I go back so often, to this day, to Moses and to myself? I have a desire to depart and to be with Christ, says Paul to the Philippians. And so have I. But, before God, I lie not. He is my witness, that I beseech Him every day about this very matter, and about little besides. I beseech Him every hour of the day, that I may be spared for some more years yet, in order that I may grow, as I have never yet grown, into this selfsame faith of the Son of God. Into the faith that justifies the ungodly, and sanctifies the sinful, and brings love, and peace, and joy, and hope, and full assurance of everlasting life, to my soul. And to preach all that as I have never yet preached it: and, then, you would perhaps take my epitaph out of Luther on the Galatians, and would write this sentence over me —"Come, and see, all ye that pass by, for here lies a right divine." Why is it that this epitaph is so seldom to be read in any of our churchyards

over our ministers? Why are there so few divines so right in Scotland as to satisfy Paul and Luther? Why are there so few of our young preachers who make Paul's determination, and stand to it? As often as I think of this great determination of his, I always remember Hooker's immortal sermon on Justification. Hooker, in this matter at any rate, was a right Pauline and Lutheran divine. And what does that master in Israel, and that equal master of an English style, say to us on this point? Every preacher of Christ, and of faith in the cross of Christ, should have this passage printed indelibly on his heart. "CHRIST HATH MERITED RIGHTEOUSNESS FOR AS MANY AS ARE FOUND IN HIM. AND IN HIM GOD FINDETH US, IF WE BE FAITHFUL; FOR BY FAITH WE ARE INCORPORATED INTO HIM. THEN, ALTHOUGH WE BE IN OURSELVES ALTOGETHER SINFUL AND UNRIGHTEOUS, YET EVEN THE MAN WHO IS IN HIMSELF IMPIOUS, FULL OF INIQUITY, FULL OF SIN; HIM BEING FOUND IN CHRIST THROUGH FAITH, AND HAVING HIS SIN IN HATRED THROUGH REPENTANCE, HIM GOD BEHOLDETH WITH A GRACIOUS EYE; PUTTETH AWAY HIS SIN BY NOT IMPUTING IT; TAKETH QUITE AWAY THE PUNISHMENT DUE THEREUNTO, BY PARDONING IT; AND ACCEPTETH HIM IN CHRIST JESUS, AS PERFECTLY RIGHTEOUS, AS IF HE HAD FULFILLED ALL THAT IS COMMANDED HIM IN THE LAW; SHALL I SAY MORE PERFECTLY RIGHTEOUS THAN IF HIMSELF HAD FULFILLED THE WHOLE LAW? I MUST TAKE HEED WHAT I SAY, BUT THE APOSTLE SAITH, 'GOD MADE HIM TO BE SIN FOR US, WHO KNEW NO SIN, THAT WE MIGHT BE MADE THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD IN HIM.'

SUCH WE ARE IN THE SIGHT OF GOD THE FATHER, AS IS THE VERY SON OF GOD HIMSELF. LET IT BE COUNTED FOLLY, OR PHRENSY, OR FURY, OR WHATSOEVER. IT IS OUR WISDOM, AND OUR COMFORT: WE CARE FOR NO KNOWLEDGE IN THE WORLD BUT THIS, THAT MAN HATH SINNED, AND GOD HATH SUFFERED: THAT GOD HATH MADE HIMSELF THE SIN OF MEN, AND THAT MEN ARE MADE THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD."

CXII

PAUL AS A PASTOR

IN his painstaking industry for Theophilus and for us, Luke has provided us with an extract-minute, so to call it, copied out of the session-books of Ephesus. Paul had been the minister and the moderator of the kirk-session of Ephesus for three never-to-be-forgotten years. But he has now for some time past been away preaching the Gospel and planting Churches elsewhere, and another elder of experience and of authority has all that time sat in the Ephesian chair that the Apostle used to occupy with such authority and acceptance. But Paul is now coming near the end of his life. He knows that, and he has a great longing, and a most natural longing it is, to see his old colleagues in Ephesus once more before he goes to be with Christ. And thus it is that at his special request an *in hunc effectum* meeting of kirk-session has been called, an extract-minute of which is to be read by the curious to this day in the twentieth chapter of the Acts of the Apostles. Now from this priceless little paper of Luke's we

learn that, the session being constituted, Paul immediately took occasion to review those long past three years that he had spent in their city, and had sat at the head of their court. Paul had given three of the best years of his life to Ephesus, and it was only natural that he should take occasion to go over those three years and look at some of the lessons that those three years had left behind them, both for himself and for his successors in the eldership of Ephesus. And it is just those fine lessons that this first of Church-historians, with such an admirable literary instinct, and with such sanctified industry, has here supplied us with. Paul never spoke better. Paul simply excels himself. There is all that stateliness that never forsakes Paul. There is all that majesty that Paul bears about with him at all times and into all places. All united to a humility, and an intimacy, and a confidingness, that always carry captive to Paul the hearts of all men who have hearts. Paul is simply unapproachable in a scene like this. Paul has no equal and no second in the matters and the manners of the heart. Paul is almost his Master over again in these matters and manners of the heart, so much so, that when it was all over, we do not wonder that they all wept sore, and fell on Paul's neck, and kissed him, sorrowing most of all for the words which he spake, that they should see his face no more. In no other single passage in all Paul's Life by Luke, or in all his own Epistles even, do we see the finished friend and the perfect pastor as in this sederunt, so to call it,

of the kirk-session of Ephesus. This sederunt, and this extract-minute of it, is a very glass in which every minister and every elder may to this day see themselves, and what manner of minister and what manner of elder they are, and are not.

"Serving the Lord," says Paul about those three years. And Paul always begins with that same thing. He begins every sermon of his, and every Epistle of his, with serving the Lord. I, Paul, the servant of the Lord, is his salutation and seal in every Epistle of his. And hence his stateliness, and hence his high seriousness, and hence his unparalleled humility, and hence his overpowering authority, and hence his whole, otherwise unaccountable, life, pastoral and all. No: the elders of Ephesus did not need to be reminded that Paul had not spent those three years serving and satisfying them. They got splendid service out of Paul, both for themselves and for their families, but all that was because Paul did not think of them at all, but only of his Master. There was a colossal pride in Paul, and at the same time a prostrate humility, such that they had never seen anything like it in any other man; a submissiveness and a self-surrender to all men, such that, as those three years went on, taught to all the teachable men among them far more for their own character and conduct than all his inspired preaching. If Paul had both forgiven and forgotten those unfortunate misunderstandings and self-assertions that will come up among the very best ministers and elders, they had not forgiven or

forgotten themselves for those days, or for their part in them. And thus it was that when Paul said these words :—"Serving the Lord," those who had known Paul best were the first to say that it was all true. Now that it was all long past, they all saw and admitted to themselves, and to one another, how in this disputed matter and in that, Paul had neither served himself, nor them, but the Lord only.

We do not at first sight see exactly why Paul should be so sore, and so sensitive, and so full of such scrupulosity, about money matters. But he had only too good cause to say all he said, and do all he did, in that root-of-all-evil matter. It was one of the many most abominable slanders that his sordid-hearted enemies circulated against Paul, that, all the time, he was feathering his own nest. He is collecting money, they said, from all his so-called Churches, and is stealthily laying up a fortune for himself and for his family in Tarsus and Jerusalem. You all know how certain scandals follow eminent and successful men as its shadow follows a solid substance. We are ashamed, down to this day, to see Paul compelled to defend his apostleship and himself from such tongues and such pens; from such whisperers and such back-biters. And yet, no. We would not have lost such outbursts as this for anything, or we would never have known Paul, or have loved him, or have believed in him and in his gospel, as we do, had we not been present at that table beside those men who had seen Paul with all their eyes day

and night for three years. I defy you! he exclaimed, as he stood up in indignation and held out his callid hands—I defy you to deny it. I have coveted no man's silver, or gold, or apparel. Yea, ye yourselves know that these hands—and as he held them up, the assembled elders saw a tongue of truth in every seam and scar that covered them—these hands have ministered to all my own necessities, and to them that were with me. Noble hands of a noble heart!

Had his apostolic stipend been in their power to reduce it or to increase it; had a fund for his old age, or a legacy for his sister and her son been at all in Paul's mind; then, in that case, he might have been tempted to keep back some things in his preaching, and to put some other things forward. At the same time, though considerations of money had nothing at all to do with it, some other matters undoubtedly had to do with it. To me it is as clear as anything can be, that the apostle had been tempted, and even commanded, by those very men sitting there, to keep back some things out of his preaching that he was wont to bring forward into it. Paul would never have said what he did say at that heart-melting moment, and he would never have said it with the heart-melting emphasis he did say it, unless be had been speaking straight to the point. It was all long past now. He would never again either please or displease any of those elders, or any of their wives or children any more. And thus it is that he so returns upon his past temptations, and with a

good conscience toward the truth, tells them that they may safely take all he had ever taught them and build upon it; for he had neither kept back anything that had been committed to his ministry among them, nor, on the other hand, had he added anything of his own to it. I kept back nothing that was profitable to you. I shunned not to declare to you the whole counsel of God. In that also there is a glass held up for all ministers and all congregations in which to see and to examine both themselves, and all their past and fast-passing relations to one another, both in the pulpit and in the pew.

"And with all humility of mind." Evangelical humility, as Jonathan Edwards so splendidly treats it, lay deep down like a foundation-stone under all Paul's attainments as a saint of God and as an apostle of Jesus Christ. Paul's Master had taken the proper precautions at the beginning of Paul's apostleship that he should be all through it, and down to the end of it, the humblest man in all the world. By that terrible thorn in his flesh; by a conscience full of the most remorseful memories; as well as by incessant trials and persecutions and sufferings of all conceivable kinds, Paul was made and was kept the humblest of all humble men. As all our preachers and pastors still are, or ought to be. For they too have each their own thorn in their own flesh, their own crook in their own lot, their own sword of God in their own heart and conscience. If it were nothing else, their daily work is the most humiliating and heart-breaking

work in all the world. All other callings may be accomplished and laid down; may reward and may bring pride to those who follow them with all their might; but never in this world the Christian ministry. And not his defeats and disappointments among his people only; but still more, the things in a minister himself that account for and justify all those defeats and disappointments—all that makes his whole ministry to collapse, and to fall in on his heart continually, like a house that has been built on the sand. Till, whatever other gifts and graces a minister may be lacking in, it is impossible for him to lack humility. With all humility of mind, says Paul to the assembled elders of Ephesus. Humility of all kinds, he means; and drawn out of all experiences; and shown to all sorts of people. Till, both for a garment of office, and for a grace of character, a minister is clothed from head to foot with spiritual and evangelical humility.

"And from house to house warning every one night and day with tears." The whole of Ephesus was Paul's parish. And, not once in a whole year, like the most diligent of us, but every day, and back again every night, Paul was in every house. Paul was never in his bed. He did not take time so much as to eat. As his people in Anwoth said about Samuel Rutherford, Paul was always working with his hands, always working with his mind, always preaching, always visiting. "At all seasons" are Paul's own enviable words. At marriages, at baptisms, at

feasts, at funerals, at the baths, and in the market-places. Now down in an old woman's cellar, and now up in a poor student's garret. Some men find time for everything. They seem to be able to manufacture time just as they need it. The sun and the moon and the stars all stand still in order that some men may get sufficient time to finish their work. It is for such men that sun and moon are created, and are kept in their places; they take their ordinances from such men, and from the Taskmaster of such men. Paul, I suppose, is the only minister that ever lived who could have read Richard Baxter's *Reformed Pastor* without going mad with remorse, and with a fearful looking for of judgment. "Another part is to have a special care of each member of our flock. We must labour to be acquainted with all our people. To know all their inclinations and conversation: for if we know not the temperament or the disease, we are likely to prove but unsuccessful physicians. A minister is not only for public preaching. One word of seasonable and prudent advice will do that good that many sermons will not do. See that they have some profitable moving book besides the Bible in each family; and if they have not, persuade them to buy some small piece of great use. If they be not able to buy them, give them some. If you cannot, get some gentleman, or other rich man that are willing to do good, to do it. Another part lieth in visiting the sick, and in helping them to prepare either for a more fruitful life, or for a happy death." There

are few things in ministerial history that makes my heart bleed like the tragedy of Jonathan Edwards' breach with his congregation, and then his banishment from his congregation. And I never can get over it that, in spite of all else, had Edwards been a pastor like Paul, that terrible shipwreck could never have taken place. And, yet, I must frankly confess, that explanation does not satisfy every case, even in my own experience. For some of the best pastors I have ever known, have been the victims of the cruellest and most heartless treachery and ingratitude, and that from some of their most pampered people.

Even the Apostle Peter makes the confession that he had found some things in Paul's Epistles hard to be understood. And so have I. And not in the Romans and the Colossians only, but almost more in this kirk-session speech of his. I can understand him, even if I cannot compete with him, in his incomparable pulpit and pastoral work. I myself go about, in a way, preaching repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ. But after I am like to drop with my work; and most of all with the arrears of it; Paul absolutely prostrates me, and tramples me to death, when he stands up among his elders and deacons and says: "I take you to record this day that I am pure from the blood of all men!" I do not find his rapture into the third heavens hard to be understood, nor his revelations and inspirations, nor his thorn in the flesh, nor any of his doctrines of Adam, or of Christ, or of election, or of justifi-

cation, or of sanctification, or of the final perseverance of the saints. It is none of all these things that I am tempted to wrest. But it absolutely passes my imagination how a horny-handed tent-maker, with twelve hours in his day, or make it eighteen, and with seven days in his week; a mortal man, and as yet an unglorified, and indeed, far from sanctified man, could look all his elders, and all their wives, and all their sons and daughters in the face, and could say those terrible words about their blood. Jesus Christ, who finished the work given Him to do, never said more than that. The only thing that ever I heard to come near that was when a Highland minister was leaving his parish, and said from the pulpit in his farewell sermon, that he took all his people to witness that he had spoken, not only from the pulpit, but personally, and in private, to every single one of his people about the state of their souls. Altogether, Paul was such a preacher, and such a pastor, and such a saint, that I cannot blame them for thinking in those days that he must be nothing less than the Holy Ghost Himself, who had been promised by Christ for to come. Such was Paul's character, and such was his work, and such was his success, both as a preacher and a pastor.

With all that, and after all that is said, I am still dazzled and absolutely fascinated with Paul's pastoral work. I cannot get Paul's pastoral work out of my mind. I cannot get it out of my imagination. I cannot get it out of my conscience. I cannot get it out of my heart. Above all his

discoveries, when Professor Ramsay goes east to dig for Paul in Ephesus, I would like him to be able to disinter Paul's pastoral-visitation book. And with it the key to those cipher and shorthand entries about what he said and what he did in this house and in that, and day and night with tears. The hours he gave to it, his division of the day and of the night, the Psalms he read and opened up from house to house, the houses that made him weep, and the houses that sent him back to his tent-making singing. Did Paul make it a rule to read, and expound, and pray, in every house, and on every visit? Did he send word by the deacon of the district that he was coming? Or did he just, in our disorderly way, start off and drop in here and there as this case and that came up into his over-crowded mind? Till the learned Professor comes upon Paul's private note-book, for myself I will continue to interpret Paul's farewell address to the kirk-session of Ephesus with some liberality. Paul does not really mean me to understand that he was always weeping, and always catechising, and always expounding, and always on his knees in the houses of Ephesus. No; Paul was Paul in all parts of his pastoral work, as well as in everything else. Paul is the last speaker to interpret in a wooden way, far less in a cast-iron way. Paul, you may depend upon it, was quite content some days just to have waved his hand in at that window, and to have saluted this and that man in the street, and to have been saluted in return by this and that gentlemanly little school-boy with his satchel on

his back. Paul would often drop in, as we say, not indeed to curse the weather, and to canvass the approaching marriages, like William Law's minister, but, all the same, to rejoice with the bridegroom and the bride, and to set down their exact date in his diary, so as to be sure to be on the spot in good time, and in his best attire. If you are a pastor, and if your visits up and down among your people help to keep your and their friendships in repair; to re-kindle and to fan the smoking flax of brotherly love; if your visits operate to the cementing and the stability of the congregation; then, that is already more than one-half of the whole end of your ministry, both pulpit and pastoral, accomplished. And, with all your preaching, and with all your pastoral work performed like Paul's, in intention and in industry at least, you also will surely be able, with great humility as well as with great assurance of faith, to bid your people goodbye, and your kirk-session, saying—And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified.

CXIII

PAUL AS A CONTROVERSIALIST

"WOE is me, my mother, that thou hast borne me a man of strife and contention to the whole earth," complained the sorrowful prophet. And the Apostle now before us might have made that very same complaint, and with much more cause. For Paul, from the beginning to the end of his apostleship, was simply plunged into a perfect whirlpool of all kinds of contention and controversy. Wherever Paul was sent to preach, north, south, east, aud west, thither his persecutors pursued him. Till, what Jeremiah exclaimed somewhat passionately and somewhat hyperbolically concerning himself, became literally true in the case of Paul. For Paul, without any exaggeration, was made nothing less than a man of strife and of contention to the whole earth.

But, then, this is always to be kept in mind, that Paul had a splendid equipment, both by nature and by grace, for his unparalleled life of apostolic controversy. Paul started out to face that life of temptation, as nearly crucified and completely

stone-dead to himself, as any man can ever hope to be in this mortal life. It is our incurable self-love that is the bitter root of all our controversies, whether those controversies are carried on by the tongue, or by the pen, or by the sword. Once slay our incurable self-love, and once plant in its place the love of God and the love of our neighbour, and you have already as good as beaten our swords into ploughshares and our spears into pruning-hooks. It is our self-idolatry and our self-aggrandisement; it is our greed, and our pride, and our intolerance, and our contempt and scorn of all other men, that is the one and only cause of all our contentions and controversies. Now, look at Paul. You cannot read Paul's Epistles without being constantly captivated with the extraordinary geniality, courtesy, humility, simplicity, and loving-kindness, of Paul. The Apostle Paul, it has been said at the cost of a certain anachronism and anomaly of speech, was the finest gentleman that ever lived. And if we take both the etymology, and the old English usage of that term, then it may quite well be let stand as a most succinct and a most expressive description of the Apostle's character. Coleridge says that while Luther was by no means so perfect a gentleman as Paul, yet the Reformer was almost as great a man of genius. And Luther gives us a taste both of his own genius and of his own gentlemanliness also, in what he says so often about Paul. Luther is always saying such things as these about Paul. "Paul was gentle, and tractable, and makeable, in his whole life. Paul was

sweet, and mild, and courteous, and soft-spoken. Paul could wink at other men's faults and failings, or else expound them to the best. Paul could be well contented to yield up his own way, and to give place and honour to all other men; even to the froward and the intractable. In short, Paul's unfailing gentlemanliness is his constant character in all the emergencies of his extraordinary life." So speaks of Paul one of the most Paul-like men of the modern world. And an English gentleman, if ever there was one, has said of Paul in more than one inimitable sermon: "There is not one of any of those refinements and delicacies of feeling, that are the result of advanced civilisation, nor any one of those proprieties and embellishments of conduct in which the cultivated intellect delights, but Paul is a pattern of it. And that in the midst of an assemblage of other supernatural excellences which is the characteristic endowment of apostles and saints."

Now, all that arose, to begin with, out of Paul's finely compounded character by birth. After Mary, Paul's mother must surely have been the most blessed of women. And then after his birth in Tarsus there was his better birth from above. And then, with all that, there was the lifelong schooling that Paul put himself through, amid the endless trials and temptations, contentions and controversies, of his apostolic life. By all these remarkable, and indeed unparalleled, means, Paul came more and more to be of that unequalled grace of fellow-feeling with all other men, and that noble temper of accommodation and

adaptation to all other men, in which he stands out and unrivalled at the head of all the saints of God. Unrivalled. For no sooner has Paul come into the same room with you, than, that moment, you feel a spell come over you. You do not know what it is exactly that has come over you, but you feel sweetened, and strengthened, and happy. It is Paul. You have never been in Paul's presence before, and therefore your present feelings are so new to you. For all the time you are together: all the time that he talks with you, and writes to you, and even debates and contends with you, Paul sees everything with your eyes, and hears everything with your ears, and feels everything with your feelings. It was this that so carried all men off their feet with Paul. It was this that made Paul such a preacher, and such a pastor, and such a friend, ay, and such an enemy. You could not have resisted Paul. You could not have shut Paul out of your heart, with all your prejudices at him, and with all your determination never to like him, and never to give in to him. Something like what Jesus Christ was to Paul, that Paul was to all men. You could not but give yourself up to Paul, he so gave himself up to you. Origen tells us that there were some men in the early church so carried captive by the Apostle that they actually believed Paul to be the indwelling Comforter Himself come in the flesh, and come into their hearts. And Origen confesses to having had a certain fellow-feeling with those heretics.

Now, my brethren, to come in all this to

ourselves. For, here also, it is the old story, let a man examine himself. Well, Paul was born a gentleman already. Now, if you have not been so born, yet I have heard it said that grace will make the most unlikely of men a gentleman. I do not deny that; only, I must say I have never known a case of it. Tertullian has a saying to the effect that some men are as good as Christian men already, just by their birth of their mother. Now Paul was one of those happy men. Paul was born with a big and a tender heart, and divine grace had all that done to her hand beforehand in Paul. Persecutor and all, there was, all the time, the making of the most perfect Christian gentleman in all Christendom in Paul. Now, you will sometimes meet with men of Paul's noble begetting and noble breeding among ourselves. Not very often indeed, but sometimes. God has not left Himself wholly without a witness, even among ourselves. Men you cannot pick a quarrel with even when you try. Men you always get your own way with them. Men you always get a soft look and a soft answer from them. Men who, when you are a churl to them, are all the more gentlemanly to you. Men to whom you may be as self-opinioned and self-willed as you like, but it takes two to make a quarrel; and, after all, you are only one. Now, if any of you have any of that rare original in you, bless God for it every day, and bless all men round about you with it every day. For there is no greater blessing to men and glory to God in all this self-enclosed and alienated life. But, on the other hand, if you are not naturally a

Christian gentleman, and yet truly wish to be such, then, know this, that God has surpassed Himself in fitting up and fitting out this present life for your transformation from what you are to what you wish to be. I did not say that the Holy Ghost could not make you, and make you behave like, a Christian gentleman, both at home and abroad. I took care what I said. I only said that I had not yet made your acquaintance.

Have you ever read that completely overlaid English classic, Paley's *Horæ Paulinæ?* In that incomparable specimen of reasoning the Archdeacon has a fine expression and a fine passage on Paul's "accommodating conduct." And that master of the pen has given us in that epithet a characteristically happy description of the apostle. For everybody who has read about Paul at all, knows this about him, that some of the greatest sufferings of his life sprang to him just out of his far too nobly accommodating conduct. Paul cast his pearls before swine. Paul's sweet and beautiful yieldingness in every matter that touched his own opinions or his own practices, taken along with his iron will in what was not his own; these two things must be taken together to know Paul. Luther, that evangelical genius almost equal to Paul himself, hits the whole matter here in a way that would have delighted Paul. "If two goats meet each other in a narrow path above a piece of water, what do they do?" asks Luther. "They cannot turn back, and they cannot pass each other; there is not an inch of spare room. If they were to butt

at each other, both would fall into the water below and would be drowned. What then will they do, do you suppose? What would you do? Well, Nature has taught the one goat to lie down and let the other pass over it, and then they both get to the end of the day safe and sound." Now, Paul was always meeting goats on narrow ledges of rock with the sea below. And so are you, and so am I. And God ordains to you and to me our meeting one another in this strait gate and on that narrow way, and right below us is the bottomless pit. Will you lie down and let me pass over your prostrate body, and then we shall both be saved?

"Above all things the servant of the Lord must not strive." So said the aged Apostle to Timothy, doing his best to put an old head on young shoulders. And I suppose every old minister who has learned anything in the school of life would say the same thing, to every young minister especially. Do not debate, said the greatest debater of his day, and one of the most masterly debaters in all literature. On no account, he said, enter into any dispute with any one, and especially about the truths of salvation. Give to all men every help to their salvation, but that of debating with them about it. And, according to my experience, William Law is wholly right. Far better let a man be demonstrably wrong in this and that opinion of his, than attempt to contradict and debate him out of it. You cannot do it. Far better a man be demonstrably ignorant in this and

that even not unimportant matter, than that he be angry at you, and resentful at you, all his days, as nine out of every ten corrected and contradicted men will certainly be. You will never set a man's opinion right if you begin by hurting his pride and crossing his temper. Cross a sinner and you will have a devil, said Thomas Shepard. That may be a little too strong, but few men are angels exactly for some time after they are crossed, and contradicted, and corrected. They are joined to their idol, let them alone. Oh, but you say, So-and-so will not leave you alone. Well, my argument is not that, but this. Let you him alone. "They say. What do they say? Let them say." Do not you even say so much as Paul said. Do not say that their judgment is just. Santa Teresa is not one of the ladies of our Scottish covenant, but this is what she says on the matter in hand: "The not excusing of ourselves is a perfect quality, and of great merit. It is a mark of the deepest and truest humility to see ourselves condemned without cause, and to be silent under it. It is a very noble imitation of our Lord. What about being blamed by all men, if only we stand at the last blameless before Thee!"

"Doing nothing by prejudice or by partiality," says the apostle, still insisting on this same matter. Now, to be absolutely free of prejudice and partiality is, I fear, not possible to any one of us in this life. But we must both learn, and labour, and pray, to be delivered from the dominion of those wicked tempers, as much as may be. This

passage is five-and-twenty centuries old, but it might have been written in London or Edinburgh yesterday. "No assurances, no pledges of either party, could gain credit with the other. The most reasonable proposals, coming from an opponent were received, not with candour, but with suspicion. No artifice was reckoned dishonourable by which a point could be carried. Every recommendation of moderate measures was reckoned either a mark of cowardice or of insincerity. He only was considered a completely safe man whose violence was blind and boundless; and those who endeavoured to steer a middle course were spared by neither side." We could all set the names of living men, ay, and of Christian men too, over against every line of that terrible indictment. But the design of the great historian in publishing that passage, as well as my design in preaching it, is to set before you and before myself, in every possible way, the mischief and the shame of such a state of things. And to determine, God helping us, to purge our hearts of all prejudice and partiality. The best political and literary journal ever published in this country, for many years held up a statesman of the last generation as a paragon of every public virtue and every personal grace. All that was noble, all that was grand and stately, all that was truly Christian, met in that minister of the Crown. But a crisis came when that hitherto peerless statesman saw it to be his duty to take a certain step in public life. And from that fatal day, nothing he ever said or did was right. Every-

thing in him, and everything in his party, was as bad as bad could be. All who spoke against him in Parliament, or on the platform, or in the press, were so many Burkes come back to life. Eloquent, statesmanlike, unanswerable, were but three of the eulogistic epithets we read in every article. While, if any writer or speaker had a single word to say for that fallen idol and for his policy, they were either rogues or fools. It was a weekly lesson. And not a few of us learned the lesson. Indeed it was written so large that no one could miss learning it. It was as if it had been printed at the head of every page,—All you who would see prejudice and partiality, read what is written below. Speaking on this whole matter for myself, I owe a great debt to the conductors of that journal, and to Butler, and to Bengel. To Butler every day for that great saying of his—"Let us remember that we differ as much from other men as they differ from us." And to Bengel for this —*non sine scientia, necessitate, amore*: enter upon no controversy without knowledge, nor without necessity, nor without love.

CXIV

PAUL AS A MAN OF PRAYER

INTELLECTUALLY as well as spiritually, as a theologian as well as a saint, Paul is at his very best in his prayers. The full majesty of the Apostle's magnificent mind is revealed to us nowhere as in his prayers. After Paul has carried his most believing and his most adoring readers as high as they are able to rise, Paul himself still rises higher and higher in his prayers. Paul leaves the most seraphic of saints far below him as he soars away up into the third heaven of rapture, and revelation, and adoration. Paul is caught up so high into paradise in his prayers, that when he returns back into the body, he is not able to tell the half of the things that he has seen and heard in the presence of God. A great theologian, who is also a great devotional writer, has warned his readers against the dangers of an untheological devotion. Now, Paul's great prayers and great praises are the best examples possible of a devotion that is theological and Christological to the core. In the Ephesians and the Colossians especially, Paul's

adoration flames up to heaven like the ascending incense of a great altar-fire. Paul's adorations in those two superb epistles especially reveal to us, as nothing else of Paul's composition reveals to us, the full intellectual strength, and the full spiritual splendour, of Paul's sanctified understanding. And then those unapproached adorations of his prove this also, that the Apostle's wonderful mind has found its predestined sphere and its sufficient scope in New Testament Theology, and especially in New Testament Christology. There may have been one or two as great intellects as Paul's in some of the surrounding dispensations of Paganism; but then those greatly gifted men had not Paul's privileges, opportunities, and outlets. God did not reveal His Son in those men. And thus it was that their fine minds never had full justice done to them in this life. But in Jesus Christ, and in Him ascended and glorified, Paul's profound mind had a boundless scope and a boundless satisfaction. The truth is, beyond the best adorations and doxologies of the Apostle Paul, the soul of man will never rise on this side the adorations and doxologies of the Beatific Vision itself.

Now my brethren, there is a lesson here of the very first importance and the very first fruitfulness to you and to me. And that lesson is this. Let us put our very profoundest Christology into our prayers. One reason why so many of our prayers, both in public and in private, are so dry, and so cold, and so full of repetition, is just because there is so little Christology in them; so little

New Testament Scripture, that is. I do not mean that there is too little New Testament language in our prayers; but there is too little both Old and New Testament language meditated on, understood, believed, realised, and felt. There is too little Scripture substance, Scripture strength, Scripture depth, and Scripture height, in our prayers. It was this that led Dr. Thomas Goodwin, by far the princeliest preacher of the Puritan pulpit, to counsel the divinity students of Oxford to "thicken" both their devotions to God, and their exhortations to their people, with apostolic doctrine. Now, even if you possess no students' books of apostolic doctrine, you possess the very Apostle himself in his Epistles, and I defy you to read his Epistles with the understanding and the heart, and not to be swept away, like their writer, into the most ecstatic and rapturous adoration. You will never be able to read in that way the doctrinal parts of the Romans, and the Ephesians, and the Colossians, or, indeed, any of Paul's Epistles, without being, now completely melted and broken, and now completely caught up into paradise, till you are a second Paul yourself. If your prayers hitherto have been a weariness to yourself, and to all men who have had to do with you, and to the Hearer of prayer Himself, get Paul's great Epistles well down into your understanding, and into your imagination, and into your heart henceforth, and out of your heart, and out of your mouth, there will flame up doxologies and adorations as seraphic and as acceptable as

Paul's own doxologies and adorations in his greatest Epistles.

The absolute unceasingness also of Paul's prayers immensely impresses us. In his own well-known words about himself Paul was "praying always with all prayer and supplication in the spirit." Now that, read literally, may well look to us like the language of a man gone into absolute exaggeration and extravagance about prayer. But it is not so. All that was literally true of Paul. Paul confessed sin for himself, and he interceded for other men; he adored also and broke out into doxologies, literally without ceasing. Do you ever employ an horology in your devotional life? You will find an excellent specimen of that apparatus and assistance to unceasing prayer on page 155 of Oliphant's edition of Andrewes's *Private Devotions*. Now just as if he had an horological tablet like that page hung up, now on his workshop-wall, and now on his prison-wall, Paul prayed night and day, and all the hours of every night and of every day, without ceasing. Like the genuine horologist he was, Paul introduced every day of his life with praise and prayer. When I awake I am still with thee! he exclaimed as he awoke. He had fallen asleep last night full of praise and prayer, and in the morning he just began again where he had left off last night. As Augustine says, Paul brought the word to the water-bason every morning and every night and made it a sacrament. Wash me, he said, and I shall be whiter than snow. I put on His righteousness, he went on, and it clothed me, it was to

me for a robe and for a diadem. Thy Word—he remembered this also out of Job as he broke his morning fast—is more to me than my necessary food. And then as the day went on, every instrument he took into his hands, and every product he put out of his hands, was oratorical to Paul. Like his divine Master, everything was to Paul another speaking parable of the Kingdom of Heaven. Everything to Paul was another call to prayer and praise. Till literally, and without any exaggeration or hyperbole whatsoever, Paul prayed and sang praises unceasingly. Until you are as old as Paul you will have no idea what a large liberty, what a rich variety, what an inexhaustible resource, and what a full range and reward, there is in prayer. What an outlet for your largest mind, and for your deepest heart, and for your richest and ripest individuality. Instead of the life of prayer being a monotony and a weariness, as we think it, there is simply no exercise of the body, and no operation of the mind, and no affection of the heart, for one moment to compare with prayer, for interest, and for variety, and for freshness, and for elasticity, and for all manner of intellectual and spiritual outlet and reward. I sometimes speak to you about Bishop Andrewes, and I do so because his *Private Devotions* is by far the best book of that kind in all the world. As also because it is never out of my own hand; and, naturally, I would like it never to be out of your hand either. And all that because Andrewes is a man after Paul's own heart, for the freshness, and for the fulness,

and for the richness of his prayers. Andrewes has a Meditation for every day of the week, and an Adoration, and a Confession of faith, and a Confession of sin, and a Supplication, and an Intercession, and a Thanksgiving, with no end of Acts of Commendation, Acts of Deprecation, Acts of Pleading, and such like. And then he has an Horology, composed exclusively out of Holy Scripture, for every hour of the day and the night. And much more of the same kind besides. What a rich, fruitful, nobly intellectual, and nobly spiritual, life Paul secured to himself, just by his habits and his hours of meditation and prayer. As Andrewes also secured in his measure. And many more who have given themselves to prayer as Paul and Andrewes gave themselves. And just because, with all that, we will not learn to pray, what a wilderness we all make this life to be to ourselves, till we lie down weary of it, and die and are buried in it. Lord, teach us to pray!

Now, just as Paul prayed always and without ceasing, so will we, if we take Paul for our master in divinity and in devotion; and if, like Paul, we go on, in all that, to make Jesus Christ our continual atonement for our sins, and our continual sanctification from our sinfulness. If we know sin at all aright, and Christ at all aright, then this will be the proof that we do so,—we will pray for pardon and for a holy heart, literally, without ceasing. How can any man cease, for a single moment, from repentance and prayer who has a heart full of sin in his bosom, and that heart beating out

its sinfulness into his body and into his mind every moment of the day and the night? That man will never cease from prayer till he has ceased from sin, any more than Paul ceased. For, with that unceasingly sinful heart within him, there are so many men, and so many things, all around him, constantly exasperating his heart. You must all know that about yourselves. You are so beset with men whom you cannot meet in the street, or hear or see their very names, but you must surely, on the spot, flee to Christ to forgive, and heal, and hide you. Those men may never have hurt a hair of your head; they will never suspect what a temptation they are to you; but such is the rooted and ineradicable malice of your heart towards them, that, as long as you and they live in this world, you will have to pray for yourself and for them without ceasing. When you cease to pray for those men, you, that moment, begin again to sin against them; and that continually drives you back to the blood of Christ both for yourselves and for them. You will never acquit Paul of having gone extravagant, and of being beside himself about prayer, till you equal and exceed him in unceasing prayer, both for yourselves and for all men. And you will so exceed him when you take your exceedingly sinful heart in your hand, and hold it in your hand, watching its motions of sin, and its need of redemption, all the day. If it were possible, and, why, in the name of God, and of your immortal soul, should you not make it possible? If it were possible, I say, to

take your private diary to-morrow, and to make a cross on the page for every time you have to flee from your own heart to the blood of Christ; and then to count up the number of the crosses at the end of the day,—if you did that, "always," and "unceasing," would be the weakest words you could use about your sin and your repentance to-morrow night. On the midday street to-morrow you would stop to make those sad marks in your book, at your meals you would make them, at business, at calls, and in conversation with your wisest, and best, and least sin-provoking, friends. At your work, at your family worship, in your pew on Sabbath, at the Lord's table itself; and, if you were a minister, in your very pulpit. "Always" and "unceasing." Paul made no exception, and found no discharge from that war. And neither will you, till you see Paul, and share his place with him, so close to his and your Master's feet, that sin will not reach you. An horology for one day like that would make you at night read both Paul's doctrines and his doxologies as you never read them before.

And I will be bold, and particular, and personal, at this point, and will say one thing of the foremost importance to you and to myself,—we must imitate Paul in this, and take far more *time* to prayer than we have ever yet taken. I am as certain as I am standing here, that the secret of much mischief to our own souls, and to the souls of others, lies in the way that we stint, and starve, and scamp our prayers, by hurrying over them.

Prayer worth calling prayer: prayer that God will call true prayer and will treat as true prayer, takes far more time, by the clock, than one man in a thousand thinks. After all that the Holy Ghost has done to make true prayer independent of times, and of places, and of all kinds of instruments and assistances,—as long as we remain in this unspiritual and undevotional world, we shall not succeed, to be called success, in prayer, without time, and times, and places, and other assistances in prayer. Take good care that you are not spiritual overmuch in the matter of prayer. Take good care lest you take your salvation far too softly, and far too cheaply. If you find your life of prayer to be always so short, and so easy, and so spiritual, as to be without cost and strain and sweat to you, you may depend upon it, you are not yet begun to pray. As sure as you sit there, and I stand here, it is just in this matter of *time* in prayer that so many of us are making shipwreck of our own souls, and of the souls of others. Were some of us shut up in prison like Paul, I believe we have grace enough to become in that sequestered life men of great and prevailing prayer. And, perhaps, when we are sufficiently old and set free from business, and are sick tired of spending our late nights eating and drinking and talking: when both the church and the world are sick tired of us and leave us alone and forget us, we, yet, short of Blackness or the Bass-rock, may find time for prayer, and may get back the years of prayer those canker-worms have eaten.

And now to come to the last and the best kind of all prayer and the crown and the finish of all Paul's prayer, intercessory prayer, namely. We have little else indeed of the prayer-kind drawn out into any length from Paul's pen but prayer for other people. If you were to collect together and tabulate by themselves all Paul's prayers of all kinds, as Dr. Pope has done in his golden book, you would find that they all come in under the head of salutations, or invocations, or benedictions: intercession, in short, of one kind or other; with, now and then, such a burst of doxology as cannot be classified except by itself. What a quiet conscience Paul must have had, and what a happy heart, in this matter of intercessory prayer, compared with the most of us. For, how many people, first and last, have asked us to pray to God for them, whom we have clean forgot. How many children, sick people, heart-broken people, has God laid on our hands, and we have never once brought them to His mercy-seat. How happy was Paul, and how happy were those churches who had Paul for their pastor. How happy to have been his fellow-elder in Ephesus, his physician, his son in the Gospel. Speaking of Paul's physician, I shall close with a few lines on this subject, out of the private papers of Sir Thomas Browne, a man of prayer, not unworthy to be named with the Apostle himself: "To pray in all places where quietness inviteth; in any house, highway, or street; and to know no street in this city that may not witness that I have not forgotten God and my Saviour in it: and that no parish

or town where I have been may not say the like. To take occasion of praying upon the sight of any church which I see, or pass by, as I ride about. To pray daily and particularly for my sick patients, and for all sick people under whose care soever. And, at the entrance into the house of the sick to say,—the peace and the mercy of God be on this house. After a sermon to make a prayer and desire a blessing, and to pray for the minister. Upon the sight of beautiful persons to bless God for His creatures ; to pray for the beauty of their souls, and that He would enrich them with inward grace to be answerable to the outward. Upon sight of deformed persons, to pray Him to send them inward graces, and to enrich their souls, and give them the beauty of the resurrection." Had Sir Thomas Browne lived in Paul's day the praying Apostle would have ranked him with Luke and would have called them his two beloved physicians.

Brethren, pray for me, said Paul. Pray for my soul, said Arthur also,—

> Pray for my soul. More things are wrought by prayer
> Than this world dreams of. Wherefore let thy voice
> Rise like a fountain for me night and day.
> For what are men better than sheep or goats
> That nourish a blind life within the brain,
> If, knowing God, they lift not hands of prayer
> Both for themselves and those who call them friend?
> For so the whole round earth is, every way,
> Bound by gold chains, about the feet of God.

But that all-important matter of *time* comes back

upon me, and will not let me go. Take *more time* to prayer, my brethren. Take one *hour* out of every twenty-four. Or, if you cannot spare an hour, take *half* an hour; or, if you would not know what to do or say for *half an hour*, take a *quarter of an hour*. Take from 8 to 9 every night, or from 9 to 10, or from 10 to 11, or *some part of that*. And, if you cannot fill up the time out of your own heart, take David, or Paul, or Andrewes, to assist you, and to show you how to pray in secret; for it is a rare, and a difficult, but an absolutely indispensable, art.

CXV

PAUL AS A BELIEVING MAN

THE extraordinary concentration of Paul's faith upon the Cross of Christ is by far the most arresting and impressive thing about Paul. It is in the way that Paul lets go everything else in order that he may rivet his faith upon the Cross of Christ alone—it is this that makes Paul our model and our master in this whole matter of the Cross of Christ. For the sake of the Cross of Christ Paul denies himself daily in many other of the great things of Christ. What splendid visions of Christ there are in Paul's magnificent Christology! What captivating and enthralling glimpses he gives us sometimes into the third heavens! But we are immediately summoned back from all that to be crucified with Christ. There is a time and there is a season for everything, says Paul. And I am determined, he says, that so far as I am concerned you shall know nothing in this life, at any rate, save Jesus Christ, and Him crucified. A great Pauline divine, the greatest indeed that I know, was wont to say that there are many things in our

Lord far more wonderful and far more glorious than even His Cross. But Paul never says that. Or if he is ever carried away to say that, he instantly takes it back and says, God forbid that I should glory save in the Cross of Christ. Like the dove to its window, like the bird to its mountain, even after he has been caught up into the third heavens, Paul hastens back to the Cross of Christ. Once Paul is for ever with the Lord; once he is sat down finally with Christ in His kingdom; once he is at home in heaven, and not merely there on a short visit; once he is completely habituated to, and for ever secure in, glory, Paul will then, no doubt, have time and detachment to give to other things in Christ besides His Cross. And yet, I am not sure. At any rate, so long as Paul is in the flesh; so long as he is still carnal and sold under sin; so long as that messenger of Satan is still buffeting him, the Cross of Christ with its sin-atoning blood is the glory that excels all else in Christ to Paul. What grapples my own heart to Paul above all else is just the unparalleled concentration of Paul's experience, and of Paul's faith, and of Paul's preaching, upon the Cross of Christ.

Another thing in Paul's faith is the extraordinary way in which he identifies himself with Christ when Christ is upon His Cross. Christ and Paul become one sacrifice for sin on the Cross. Christ and Paul combine and coalesce and are united into one dying sinner on the accursed tree. It takes both Paul and Christ taken together to

make up Christ crucified. Christ is apprehended, is accused, is condemned, and is crucified before God for Paul; and, then, Paul is crucified before God in, and along with, Christ. It is this transcendent identification of Christ with Paul and of Paul with Christ that the Apostle so labours, in the strength and in the style of the Holy Ghost, to set forth to us in his glorious doctrines of the suretyship and substitution of Christ, the imputation of Paul's guilt and pollution to Christ, and then the imputation of Christ's righteousness and the impartation of Christ's spirit to Paul. These great evangelical doctrines of Paul may be so divine and so deep that your heart does not yet respond to them. Paul's tremendously strong words about Christ and His Cross may stagger you, but that is because the law of God has not yet entered your heart. When it does, and when, after that, God reveals His Son in you, you will then become as Pauline in your theology and in its great language as Luther became himself. I can very well believe that Paul's so original, so powerful, and so cross-concentrated faith, staggers and angers some of you. It does not stagger and anger any of you half so much as at one time it both staggered and positively exasperated Paul himself. But now, he says, I am crucified with Christ: with Christ who loved me, and gave Himself for me. And once Paul's faith is in this way concentrated on the Cross of Christ: and once Paul is so identified with Christ crucified: everything in Paul's experience—past, present, and yet

to come—all that only roots the deeper and the stronger Paul's faith in the Cross of Christ. I often recall the evidence that Admiral Dougall gave at the Tay Bridge inquiry as to the direction and the force of the winds that blow down the valley of the Tay. "Trees are not so well prepared to resist pressure from unusual quarters," said that observant witness. "A tree spreads out its roots in the direction of the prevailing wind." Now Paul's faith was like one of the Admiral's wind-facing trees. For Paul's faith continually spread out its roots in the direction of the coming storm. Only, the wind that compelled Paul's faith to spread out its roots around the Cross of Christ blew down from no range of earthly mountains. It was the overwhelming wind of God's wrath that rose with such fury upon Paul's conscience out of Paul's past life. The blasts of divine wrath that blew off the bleak sides of Sinai struck with such shocks against Paul's faith in Christ, that, like the trees on the wind-swept sides of the Tay, it became just by reason of that wind so rooted and grounded in Christ crucified, that however the rain might descend, and the floods come, and the winds blow and beat upon Paul's faith, it fell not, for it had struck its roots, with every new storm, deeper and deeper into the Cross of Christ.

Down suddenly out of the dark mountains of Paul's past life of sin, the most terrible tempests would, to the very end of his days, burst upon Paul. You must not idolise Paul. You must not totally misread and persistently misunderstand Paul, as if

Paul had not been a man of like passions with yourselves. Paul was a far better believer than you or I are. But as to sin there is no difference. And the very greatness of Paul's faith; the very unparalleled concentration and identifying power of his faith; all that only made the sudden blasts that struck at his faith all the more terrible to bear. Oh, yes! you may depend upon it Paul had a thousand things behind him that swept down guilt and shame and sorrow upon his head to the day of his death. The men and the women and the children he had haled to prison; the holy homes he had desolated with his temple hordes; the martyrdoms he had instigated, the blood of which would never in this world be washed off his hands; in these, and in a thousand other things, Paul was a child of wrath even as others. And that wrath of God would awaken in his conscience, and would assault his faith, just as that same wrath of God assaults your faith and mine every day we live: if, that is to say, we live at all. No, there is no difference. The only difference is that Paul always met that rising wrath with a faith in Christ crucified that has never been equalled. "I, through the law," he said, or tried to say, every time the law clutched at him as its prisoner—"I through the law am dead to the law. For I am crucified with Christ." When the two thieves died on their two crosses on Calvary, ay and even after their dead bodies were burned to ashes in Gehenna, there would still come up to the courts of justice in Jerusalem, com-

plaints and accusations against those two malefactors from all parts of the land. 'He stole my ox.' 'He robbed my house.' 'He burned down my barn.' 'He murdered my son.' But the judge would say to all such too-late accusations that the murderer was dead already. 'He has been crucified already. He is beyond your accusations and my jurisdiction both. He has paid already with his life for all his deeds of robbery and of blood. His death has for ever blotted out all that can ever be spoken or written against him.' And so it was with Paul. All his persecutions, and all his blasphemies, with all else of every evil kind that could come up out of his past life,—it would all find Paul already a dead man. Paul is crucified. Paul has given up the ghost. Paul is for ever done with accusers and judges both: come up what will, leap into the light what will, it is all too late. A dead man is not easily put to shame, and no jailor carries a corpse to prison. Nay, Paul's case is far better than even that of the death-justified thieves. For, in Paul's case, two men are dead for one man's trangressions. And not two mere men, but one of them the very Son of God Himself. Truly the law is magnified and made honourable in Paul's case! Ten thousand times more honourable than if it had never been broken, since the Divine Lawgiver Himself has satisfied the broken law, and has Himself been crucified for Paul's transgressions.

And as it was with the thieves' past, and with Paul's past, so it is with your past and mine.

With mine at any rate. "Let a man examine himself!" Paul kept saying to me all the week before last, and himself showed me the way. But indeed I did not need to examine myself, nor to be shown the way. My past, *of itself*, came down upon me like the thieves' past, and like Paul's past, and like that Sabbath night's storm on the Tay train. From every city and village and house I had ever lived in, the wind blew and beat upon my conscience. Out of every relationship of life that God had ever set me in. Out of my pulpit, out of my pastorate, out of my family life, out of my closest and best friendships. Sins of omission and sins of commission. What I should have done, and did not. What I hated, and yet did. The temptation and the trial I had been to other men. The sin and the sorrow I had caused. The provocation and the offence I had been. The blame I had brought on the ministry,—and a thousand suchlike things. I could give you the names of the people and the places, only you would not know them. I leave the spaces blank for this reason also, that you may fill them in with the people, and the places, and the things, that sent you to the same Table in tears. What kind of a communion had you last Sabbath? I have no doubt many of you had both a better preparation and a better Communion Table than I had, though mine were by far the best I have ever had heretofore.

But Paul's peculiar and arresting form of speech in the text carries in it the secret of a great victory and a great peace. For mark well, what exactly

Paul says. Paul does not say that he once was, or that he had been, crucified with Christ, but that he *is*, *at present*, so crucified. That is as much as to say that as long as Paul has any sin left so long will Christ be crucified. Not only is Paul's past sin all collected up and laid on Christ crucified; but almost more all Paul's present sinfulness comes up upon his conscience only to find Paul dead to his conscience, and to his sinfulness too, so truly and so completely is he crucified with Christ. It is impossible properly, or even with safety, to describe to a whole congregation Paul's experience. But those who have this blessed experience in themselves do not need it to be described to them, and their own tender hearts and holy lives are the best proof of its safety. I will attempt to describe to some of you what your life is, and the description will somewhat comfort and assure you concerning it. Your heart beats up its secret sinfulness with every pulse, so much so, that you would choke and consume and die with the guilt and the pollution of your heart, unless you were dead already. As it is, though nobody will believe it, or make sense of how it can so be, your unspeakable sinfulness never gets the length even of darkening your mind or imprisoning your conscience. And that is because your mind and your conscience are both in the keeping of Christ crucified. As Luther's conscience was. "The law is not the lord of my conscience," protested that Paul-like, that lion-like, believer. "Jesus Christ is Almighty God, and He is the

Lord of my conscience. He is the Lord of the law also, both unbroken, broken, and repaired, and He keeps the law out of my conscience by keeping my conscience continually sprinkled with His own peace-speaking blood." In Paul's words again, the true believer is "dead," both to the law, and to the sin and the guilt of his own corruption. A true believer's corruption of heart comes up into his consciousness not in order to produce there a bad conscience, but in order to find the believer crucified already for all that corruption with Christ. For myself, I could not live a day, nor any part of a day, were I not crucified with Christ. I would sicken, I would swoon, I would fall down on the street, I would die. Come up beside me, my brethren! There is room in Christ crucified for us all. I am sure you live a miserable life down there, and out of Christ. It is not a dog's life down there. Come up hither to peace and rest. Learn to say, and then say it continually till you say it in your very dreams,—I am crucified with Christ! And then you will be able to work in peace, and to eat and drink in peace, and to go out and in in peace, and to lie down in peace, and rise up. Then you will be able to die in peace, and to awake for ever to Christ and His never-to-be-broken peace. "I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me, and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me."

"HIMSELF for *me*, HIMSELF for *me!*" There is

a faith that for once surely, if never again, will satisfy even Jesus Christ, and will set Him free to do some of His mightiest works. If He went about all Jewry, and all Galilee, and even crossed over into Syrophenicia, seeking for faith, surely here it is to please Him at last. The SON OF GOD *for me!* Surely that must go to Christ's heart, and carry His heart captive. And we also will say it; I, at any rate, will say it with Paul. For as God is my witness I feel with Paul that nothing and no one but God the Son, and God the Son crucified, could atone for my sin. The Son of God on Calvary, with all heaven and all hell let loose upon Him,—He, and He alone: He and His blood alone, can meet and make answer to the guilt and the pollution of my sin. But His blood, THE BLOOD OF GOD,—It is surely able to speak peace in my conscience and comfort in my heart: in my curse-filled conscience, and in my hell-filled heart. "HIMSELF for *me!* HIMSELF for *me!*" For the shame, the spitting, the scourging, the staggering through the hooting streets, the bitter nails, the heart-gashing spear, the darkness of death and hell, all crowned by His Father forsaking Him,—Yes, *that* is the desert of *my* sin. *That* answers to *my* sin. *My* sin explains *all that*, and needs *all that*, and will be satisfied with nothing short of *all that*. *My sin* alone, in heaven, or earth, or hell, is the full justification of *all that*. *All that*, borne for me by my Maker, my Lawgiver, and my Redeemer. But it is best just as Paul has left it,—"HE loved *me*, and gave HIMSELF for *me*."

CXVI

PAUL AS THE CHIEF OF SINNERS

EVERYBODY knows what the most eminent saints of Holy Scripture think and say of their sinfulness. And here is what some of the most eminent saints who have lived since the days of Holy Scripture have felt and said about their own exceeding sinfulness also. And to begin with one of the very saintliest of them all—Samuel Rutherford. "When I look at my sinfulness," says Rutherford, "my salvation is to me my Saviour's greatest miracle. He has done nothing in heaven or on earth like my salvation." And the title-page of John Bunyan's incomparable autobiography runs thus: "Grace abounding to John Bunyan, the chief of sinners. Come and hear, all ye that fear God, and I will declare what He hath done for my soul." "Is there but one spider in all this room?" asked the Interpreter. Then the water stood in Christiana's eyes, for she was a woman quick of apprehension, and she said, "Yes, Lord, there is more here than one; yea, and spiders whose venom is far more

destructive than that which is in her." "My daughters," said Santa Teresa on her deathbed, "do not follow my example; for I have been the most sinful woman in all the world." But what she most dwelt on as she died was that half verse, "*Cor contritum*—a broken and a contrite heart, O God, Thou wilt not despise." "Do not mistake me," said Jacob Behmen, "for my heart is as full as it can hold of all malice at you and all ill-will. My heart is the very dung-hill of the devil, and it is no easy work to wrestle with him on his own chosen ground. But wrestle with him on that ground of his I must, and that the whole of my life to the end." "Begone! all ye self-ignorant and false flatterers," shouted Philip Neri at them; "I am good for nothing but to do evil." "When a man like me," says Luther, "comes to know the plague of his own heart, he is not miserable only—he is absolute misery itself; he is not sinful only—he is absolute sin itself." "I am made of sin," sobbed Bishop Andrewes, till his private prayer-book was all but unreadable to his heirs because of its author's sweat and tears. "It has often appeared to me," says Jonathan Edwards, "that if God were to mark my heart-iniquity my bed would be in hell." "I sat down on the side of a stank," says Lord Brodie, "and was disgusted at the toads and esks and many other unclean creatures I saw sweltering there. But all the time my own heart was far worse earth to me, and filthier far than the filthy earth I sat upon." "This is a faithful saying," says Paul, "and worthy of all

acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief." Well may our Saviour stop us and ask us whether or no we have counted the cost of being one of His out-and-out disciples!

I can very well believe that there are some new beginners here who are terribly staggered with all that. They were brought up positively to worship the Apostle Paul, and Luther, and Rutherford, and Bunyan. And how such saints of God can write such bitter things against themselves, you cannot understand. You would like to acquiesce in all that these men say about all such matters as sin and sinfulness; but you do not see how they can honestly and truly say such things as the above about themselves.

> Fool! said my muse to me,
> Look in thy heart and write.

Remember these two lines of the true poet. Though they were not written about sin they never come to their fullest truth and their most fruitful application till they are taken home by the sinner who is seeking sanctification. Yes; look well into your own heart and you will find there the true explanation of your perplexity about Paul, and Luther, and Rutherford, and Bunyan, and all the rest. For your own heart holds the secret to you of this whole matter. If you have any real knowledge of your own heart at all, this cannot possibly have escaped you, that there are things in your own heart that are most shocking

and prostrating for you to find there. There are thoughts in your heart, and feelings, and wishes, and likes and dislikes; things you have to hide, and things you cannot hide; things that if you have any religion at all you must take on your knees to Jesus Christ every day, and things you cannot take to anything even in Him short of His sin-atoning blood. Well, you have in all that the true key to Paul's heart, and to the hearts of all the rest. So much so that if you advance as you have begun you will soon be staggering new beginners yourself with the Scriptures you read, and with the psalms and hymns you select, and with the petitions you offer ere ever you are aware; and, it may yet be, with the autobiography you will yet write to tell to all that fear God what He hath done for your soul. Just go on in the lessons of that inward school, and you will soon stagger us all by the passion that you, as well as David and Asaph, will put into the most penitential psalm.

"The highest flames are the most tremulous," says Jeremy Taylor. That is to say, the holiest men are the most full of holy fear, holy penitence, holy humility, and holy love. And all that is so because the more true spirituality of mind any man has, the more exquisite will be that man's sensibility to sin and to the exceeding sinfulness of sin. "The saints of God are far too sharp-sighted for their own self-satisfaction," says William Guthrie in his golden little book. So they are. For, by so much the holier men they become in the sight and estimation both of God and man,

the more hideous and the more hopeless do they become to themselves. Such is their more and more sharpened insight into their own remaining sinfulness. Even when God is on the point of translating them to Himself because they so please Him, at that very moment they feel that they were never so near being absolute castaways. When all other men are worshipping them for their saintliness, and rightly so, those right saints of God are gnashing their teeth at the devilries that are still rampant in their own heart. They hate themselves the more you love them. They curse themselves the more you bless them. The more you exalt and enthrone them the more they lie with their faces on the earth. When you load them with honours, and banquet them with praises, they make ashes their bread and tears their drink. Their whole head will be waters, and their eyes one fountain of tears just at that moment when God is rising up in compassion, and in recompense, to wipe all tears from their eyes for ever.

And it is the sight of God that does it. It is the sight of Jesus Christ that does it. It is God's holy law of love entering our hearts ever deeper and deeper that does it. It is when I take my own heart, with all its wickedness-working self-love, and with all its self-seeking in everything, and self-serving out of everything and every one: with all its deceitfulness, and disingenuousness, and envy, and jealousy, and grudging, and malevolence, and lay it alongside of the holy heart of my Lord,—it is that that does it. It is then that I sit down at

a stank-side with poor Lord Brodie. It is then that my midnight Bible begins to open at unwonted places, and I begin to make bosom friends of unwonted people. It is then that I search the Book of Job, say, not any more for its incomparable dialectic and its noble literature. All these things, as Halyburton has it, have now become comparatively distasteful to me. Or if not distasteful, then without taste and insipid, as Job himself says about the white of an egg. No: my soul turns in its agony of pain and shame and seeks an utterance for itself in such consummating passages as these. "I have heard of Thee by the hearing of the ear: but now mine eye seeth Thee. Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes. Behold, I am vile: what shall I answer Thee? I will lay my hand upon my mouth." And from that my Bible begins to open at the right places for me in David, and in Asaph, and in Ezra, and in Daniel, and in Peter, and in Paul: and so on to all Paul-like men down to my own day. And thus it comes about that the authors who are classical to me now are not the ephemerids in religion or in literature that I used to waste my time and my money upon when I was a neophyte: my true classics now are those masterly men who look into their own hearts and then write for my heart. It is the sight of God that has made them the writers they are, and it is the same sight that is at last making me the reader that I, too late, am beginning to be. It is the sight of God that does it, till my sinfulness takes such a deep spiritualness, and such a

high exclusiveness, and such a hidden secretness, that I can find fit utterance for all that is within me in David, and in David's greatest psalms, alone. As thus:—"Against Thee, Thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in Thy sight. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, Thou wilt not despise. Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me."

It was their own sin; or to speak much more exactly, it was their own sinfulness, that so humbled Rutherford and Bunyan and Christiana and Teresa, and broke their hearts. Nothing at all humiliates; nothing really touches the hearts of people like them; but the inward sinfulness of their own hearts. We shallow-hearted fools would think and would say that it was some great crime or open scandal that those saintly men and women had fallen into. Oh, no! there were no men nor women in their day of so blameless a name as they. One of themselves used to say that it was not "so humiliating and heart-breaking to be sometimes like a beast, as to be always like a devil. But, to be both!" he cried out in his twofold agony. The things of this world also that so humiliate all other men do not any more bring so much as a momentary blush to men like Rutherford, and women like Teresa. Just go over the things that humiliate and shame you in your earthly life and its circumstances; and then pass over into the ranks of God's saints, and you will there enter on a career of humiliation that will quite drink up

the things that make you so ashamed now, till you will completely forget their very existence. What I am at this moment contending for is this, that sin alone truly humiliates a saint, even as holiness alone truly exalts him. It was sin, and especially sinfulness, that made those great saints cry out as they did.

A Greek fortune-teller was once reading Socrates's hands and face to discern his true character and to advertise the people of Athens of his real deserts. And as he went on he startled the whole assembly by pronouncing Socrates the most incontinent and libidinous man in all the city; the greatest extortioner and thief; and even worse things than all that. And when the enraged crowd were about to fall upon the soothsayer and tear him to pieces for saying such things about their greatest saint, Socrates himself came forward and restrained their anger and confessed openly and said, "Ye men of Athens, let this truth-speaking man alone, and do him no harm. He has said nothing amiss about me. For there is no man among you all who is by nature more predisposed to all these evil things than I am." And with that he quieted and taught and solemnised the whole city. Now in that again Socrates was God's dispensational apostle and preacher to the Greek people. For he was teaching them that there is, to begin with, no difference. That our hearts by nature are all equally evil. But that, as the Stoics taught, though all vice is equally in us all, it is not equally extant in us all. As also that he who knows his

own heart will measure his own worth by his own heart and not by the valuation of the street and the market-place. As also that the noblest and best men in all lands, and in all dispensations, are those who know themselves, and who out of that knowledge keep themselves under, and wait upon God, till they attain in His good time to both a blameless heart, a blameless conscience, and a for ever blameless life.

Yet another use of this solemn subject is for the comfort of the true people of God. It is to let them see that they are not alone, and that no strange thing is befalling them, in all they are passing through. For myself, when I hear Paul saying this that is in the text, and Luther, and Rutherford, and Bunyan, and Andrewes, and Edwards, and Brodie, it is with me as it was with John Bunyan's pilgrim in the valley of the shadow of death. "About the midst of the valley I perceived the mouth of hell to be, and it stood hard by the wayside, and ever and anon the flame and smoke, with sparks and noises, would come out in such abundance that Christian said, What shall I do? One thing I would not that you let slip. Just when he was come over against the mouth of the burning pit, one of the wicked ones got behind him, and stepped up softly to him, and whisperingly, suggested many grievous blasphemies to him, which he verily thought had proceeded from his own mind. This put Christian to it more than anything he had met with before, yet could he have helped it, he would not have done it, but he

had not the discretion, neither to stop his ears, nor to know from whence these blasphemies came." And here comes our point. "When Christian had travelled in this disconsolate condition some considerable time, he thought he heard the voice of a man, as going before him, saying, Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear none ill, for Thou art with me. Then was Christian glad, and that for these reasons. First, because he gathered from them that some one who feared God was in the valley as well as himself. Second, for that he perceived God was with them, though in that dark and dismal state; and why not, thought he, with me? though by reason of the impediment that attends this place, I cannot perceive it. Thirdly, for that he hoped to have company by and by. So he went on, and called to him that was before, but that he knew not what to answer, for that he also thought himself to be alone. But by and by the day broke. Then said Christian, He hath turned the shadow of death into the morning."

CXVII

THE THORN IN PAUL'S FLESH

THE circumstances with Paul were these. To prepare Paul for his great Apostolic work he had been endowed with the most extraordinary gifts of mind. Paul was a man of genius of the very foremost rank. To my mind no man that I know, sacred or profane, is worthy for one moment to stand in the same intellectual and spiritual rank with Paul. And then nothing exalts a man, sacred or profane, in his own esteem like a great intellect. A towering intellect is perhaps the greatest temptation that can be put upon any mortal man. And then the unparalleled privileges and promotions that were added to all that in Paul's case, combined to make Paul's temptation to vainglory the most terrible temptation that ever was put upon any human being,—unless we call Jesus Christ a human being. But to keep to Paul. His election out of all living men for the greatest service and the greatest reward after the service and the reward of Jesus Christ Himself; his miraculous conversion;

his unparalleled honours and privileges after his conversion far above all the greatest Apostles taken together; his labours more abundant than they all; and his transcending successes—all that was enough, according to Paul's own admission and confession afterwards, to exalt him above measure. Rightly received and rightly employed all these things ought only to have made Paul the humblest and the lowliest-minded of all men. But the very fact that He who knew His servant through and through saw it to be absolutely necessary to balance His servant's talents and prerogatives with such thorns and such buffetings, is a sure lesson to us that the humblest of saints is not safe from pride, nor the most heavenly-minded of men above dangerously delighting in the glory of this earth. In short, by far the best saint then living on the face of the earth was but half sanctified, and his Divine Master saw that to be the case, and took steps accordingly.

Now just what that thorn in Paul's flesh really was nobody knows. No end of guesses and speculations have been ventured about it, but with no real result. The Fathers and the Middle-age men for the most part took Paul's thorn to be something sensual, while the great body of Protestant and evangelical commentators hold that it must have been something wholly spiritual and experimental. Chrysostom thought he saw Hymenæus and Alexander in it. Whereas Calvin took it to be the lifelong impalement of Paul's inner man upon all kinds of trouble and trial. Mosheim

again felt sure it was the ranklings of lifelong remorse out of Paul's early days; and so on. In our own day interpretation has taken a line of its own on this matter. Lightfoot holds strongly that it was epilepsy. And while Dean Farrar admits that there is something to be said for epilepsy, he decides on the whole for ophthalmia. And then Professor Ramsay, Paul's latest, and in his own field one of Paul's very best commentators, has no doubt at all but that it was one of the burning-up fevers so frequent to this day in Asia Minor. Whatever his thorn really was, we are left in no doubt as to what Paul did with it. And we are left in just as little doubt as to what his Master's mind and will were about it. And then all that leads us up to this magnificent resolve of the Apostle—"Most gladly, therefore, will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me." A splendid parenthesis, in a splendid argument. An autobiographic chapter of the foremost instructiveness and impressiveness, and of all kinds of profit and delight, to read and to remember.

Now while it will be the most fruitless of all our studies to seek to find out what exactly Paul's secret thorn was; on the other hand it will be one of the most fruitful and rewarding of all our very best studies, both of ourselves and of Holy Scripture also, if we can find out what our own thorn is, and can then go on to make the right use of our own thorn. To be told even by himself just what Paul's thorn actually was would

not bring to us one atom of real benefit. But if I have a thorn in my own flesh, and if I know what it is, and why it is there, and what I am to do with it—that will be one of the divinest discoveries in this world to me; that will be the salvation of my own soul to me. Never mind the commentators on Paul's thorn; no not the very best of them, lest they draw your attention away from your own. Be you your own commentator on all such subjects. Be you your own thorn-student, especially. What is it then that so tortures you, and rankles in you, till your life is absolutely intolerable to you? What is it that gnaws and saps and undermines all your joy in this life? What is it that makes you beseech the Lord thrice, and without ceasing, that it may depart from you? Tell me that, and then I will tell you Paul's thorn.

Oh, no! you exclaim to me, it was not his sore eyes. It was not his bad headaches. It was not even his frequent falling-sicknesses. Oh dear no, you say again. A thousand years of the most splitting headaches would not have laid you so low and so helpless; they would not have so taken the blood out of your cheeks, and so broken off all your interest and stake in life, and so cast you on your knees continually, as this thing has done that you point at so mysteriously, but with such evident assurance that you yourself have fallen into the same hedge of thorns with Paul. You cannot be absolutely and demonstrably sure, you admit, that it was not epilepsy, or ophthalmia, or a consuming fever

in Paul. But you protest at us, as if we had been stealing Paul from you, that if it was either sore eyes, or a sick headache, or anything of that kind, then Paul was not the man that up till now you have taken him to be. But you will not let all the world, learned or ignorant, take away Paul from you. Almost as well take away his Master! No! you break out with Bunyan, Paul was that nightingale that sang his song from God to you because his breast was all the time pressed upon the thorn. You cannot sing like Paul, but you have not met with any man who follows Paul's song with more knowledge and with more enjoyment than you do; and therefore you reason that you have Paul's same thorn of God against your breast. And you speak so convincingly, and with such a note of assurance about it, that you almost persuade us that you have actually found out the riddle. Only, you are almost as mysterious about this whole matter as Paul was himself. There are some things, you say, that must remain mysteries, till each man discovers them for himself. No man ever discovered and laid bare Paul's thorn to you, and you will never open your thorn to any man who has not already suffered from, and so discovered, his own. You only wait till our breast is at our thorn also; and then by our singing you will know what has happened to us also. When we so sing, or so listen to such singing, you will enrol us with Paul and with yourself among those who have come to visions and revelations of the Lord. Oh, no! you smile at our innocence,

and say to us: Don't you see that the grace and the strength of Christ are not prescribed anywhere else in Holy Scripture for epilepsy or ophthalmia? Luke was there with his balsams, and with his changes of air, and with his rests in a desert place, for all these ailments of the Apostle. Don't you see, you demand of us, that this very prescription proclaims the malady; the very medicine more than half discovers the disease. Iron: a little wine: sound sleep: nourishing food: a month at the baths up among the mountains; these things would cure the commentators. But the grace and the strength of Christ are reserved for far other thorns than Luke could extract, or even alleviate.

It is no wonder that the most learned men have been at their wits' end about Paul's thorn. No blame to them since the very Apostle himself made such a profound mistake about his own thorn. With all his clearness of intellect, and with all his spiritual insight, Paul was as much at sea about his own thorn as if he had been a commentator of the dark ages. If I may say so, with my unsurpassed respect for so great an Apostle, he behaved like one of his own neophytes when his own thorn first came to him from Christ. By that time he ought to have been a teacher, but he had still need himself to be taught which be the first principles of personal religion, and had need of milk, and not of strong meat. For no sooner did the inward bleeding begin in Paul; no sooner did he begin to lose his night's rest because of the

pain; no sooner did his heart begin to sink within him, than he fell to praying with all his well-known importunity that this whole thorn of his might be immediately taken away. Greatest of the apostles as he was; councillor almost of God Himself as he was; Paul's insight and faith and patience wholly failed him when his own thorn began its sanctifying work within him. You never made a greater mistake yourself than Paul made. With all his boasted knowledge of the mind of Christ, there was not a catechumen in Corinth or in Philippi with more of a fretful child in him than the so-called great Apostle was when his thorn came into his own flesh. For just hear his own ashamed confession long afterwards as to what he did. Without ever once asking either his Master or himself why that thorn had been sent to him; without ever looking once into his own heart for the sure explanation and the clear justification of the thorn, he instantly demanded that it should be removed. He acted as if his Master had paid no attention as to what befel His servant. He behaved himself as if his thorn had come to him out of nothing better than Christ's sheer caprice. 'This,' he said thrice, 'is so much pure and purposeless pain. This is so much quite gratuitous suffering that Thou hast let come upon me. Let this thorn only depart from me,' he cried, 'and I will return to my faith, and to my love, and to my service of Thee and Thy people; but not otherwise. As long as this thorn lasts and thus lacerates me, how shall I serve Thee or finish Thy

work?' But his Lord compassionately overlooked and freely forgave Paul all his unbelief and all his impatience and all his foolish charges, and condescended and said to him: My grace is sufficient for thee; for My strength is made perfect in weakness. Lord, exclaimed Peter in his precipitancy, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head. And Paul, a much stronger and a much less excitable man, said after he got his answer, and said it more and more all his days: 'Lord, not in one part of my flesh only, but plant those soul-saving thorns of Thine in all the still sinful parts of my body and my mind, in order that the power of Christ may rest upon me. For now as often as I am weak then am I strong. I am become a fool in my complaining. I still mistake my own salvation even when it lies at my door.'

But to come back to our riddle, and to set it over again to ourselves, so as to carry it home and work at it till we find out its true answer. What then is that thorn in the flesh of all God's best saints and of all Christ's best servants,—that thorn which still humbles, and humbles, and humbles them down, past all possible glorying in anything they are, or have ever been, or can ever be? Humbles the most heavenly-minded men in all the world down to death and hell, and so humbles such men only? What is it that Christ sends to stab His best servants deeper and deeper every day, and to impale them and buffet them till they are so many dead corpses rather than living and

breathing and Christian men? And then on the other hand, what is that same thorn and stake and devil's fist that at every stab and stound and blow draws down the whole grace of Jesus Christ on the sufferer, till the sanctified saint kisses his thorn, and blesses his Lord, and would not part with the one or the other for all the world? Samson offered so many sheets and so many changes of raiment to any Philistine who within seven days would declare his riddle. And after John Bunyan had reset Samson's riddle to the readers of his *Grace Abounding* he felt sure that his sheets and his changes of raiment were all quite safe, for, after his offer to them, he said "The Philistines will not understand me. But, all the same, it is written in the Scriptures, the father to the children shall make known in holy riddles the deep things of God." I give you therefore the next seven days and seven nights, Philistines and all, to find out Paul's great riddle. And as many of the children of light as shall have found out the only possible answer by this night se'ennight shall here receive, along with the grace and strength of Christ, a change of raiment. Now Joshua was clothed with filthy garments, and stood before the angel. And He answered and said to those that stood before him, saying: Take away the filthy garments from him. And unto him He said: Behold, I have caused thine iniquity to pass from thee, and I will clothe thee with change of raiment. And I said, Let them set a fair mitre upon his head. So they set a fair mitre

upon his head. And the angel of the Lord stood by. Such a reward still awaits all those who so plough with Paul's heifer as to find out his riddle. Yes; such a beautiful change of raiment awaits them, and such a fair mitre upon their head.

CXVIII

PAUL AS SOLD UNDER SIN

S often as my attentive bookseller sends me "on approval" another new commentary on the Romans I immediately turn to the seventh chapter. And if the commentator sets up a man of straw in the seventh chapter, I immediately shut the book. I at once send back the book and say, No, thank you. That is not the man for my hard-earned money. Just as Paul himself would have scornfully sent back the same book with this message to its author—If I have told you earthly things, and you have so misunderstood me, how shall I trust you to interpret my heavenly things? No, thank you, I say, as I send back the soon-sampled book. But send me for my students as many Luthers on the Galatians as you can lay your hands on, and as many Marshalls on Sanctification, in order that they may one day be preachers after Paul's own heart. But no, not that blind leader of the blind.

It is an old canon of interpretation that Paul

alone is his own true interpreter. And the true student will take the canon down. *Non, nisi ex ipso Paulo, Paulum potes interpretari.* That is to say—There is no other possible interpreter of Paul, in all the world of interpretation, but only Paul himself. And I have come upon two other exegetical rules that have had the most profound results out of this present text; "the right context is half the interpretation." And this out of the same incomparable interpreter of Paul—"If a man would open up Paul, let him do it rationally. Let him consider well the Apostle's own words both before the text and after it." Now when we take Paul in this present text as speaking seriously and not in a sacred jest; and then when we take the whole context, we get an interpretation altogether worthy of Paul; altogether worthy of the depth and strength and majesty of the Epistle to the Romans; altogether worthy of the grace of God, and of the blood of Jesus Christ, as, also, altogether worthy of the Holy Ghost. Then the seventh of the Romans becomes henceforth to us, what it most certainly is, the most terrible tragedy in all literature, ancient or modern, sacred or profane. Set beside the seventh of the Romans all your so-called great tragedies—your Macbeths, your Hamlets, your Lears, your Othellos, are all but so many stage-plays: so much sound and fury, signifying next to nothing when set alongside this awful tragedy of sin in a soul under a supreme sanctification. The seventh of the Romans should always be printed in letters of

blood. Here are passions. Here are terror and pity. Here heaven and hell meet, as nowhere else in heaven or hell; and that too for their last grapple together for the everlasting possession of that immortal soul, till you have a tragedy indeed; and, beside which, there is no other tragedy. Only, as Luther says, give not such strong wine to a sucking child.

"Did I see," says Dr. Newman, "a boy of good make and mind, with the tokens on him of a refined nature, cast upon the world without provision, unable to say whence he came, unable to tell us his birthplace, or his family connections, I should conclude that there was some sad secret connected with his history." And did I hear or read of a man of refined mind, and of great nobility of nature that nothing could obliterate, and, withal, a truly Christian man; did I read or hear of such a man held in captivity by some vile, cruel, cannibal tribe in South America, or Central Africa, I would feel sure that he had a tale to tell that would harrow my heart. I would not need to be told by pen and ink the inconsolable agony of that man's heart. I could picture to myself that poor captive's utter wretchedness. I could see him making desperate attempts to escape his horrible captivity, only to be overtaken and dragged back to a still more cruel bondage. And were that captive able by some secret and extraordinary providence to send home to this country so much as a single page out of his dreadful life, it would scarcely be believed, so far past all imagination of free men at home would be

his incoherent outcries. But all that would be but a school-boy's story-book beside this agonised outcry of a great saint of God sold under sin. Yes, a great saint of God. For no soul of man is sold under sin to such an agony as this who is not, all the time, a heaven-born and a holy man: holy almost as God is holy. This is the slavery of the spirit in a supremely spiritual man: a slavery past all imagination of the commonplace Christian mind. You see that in the incredulous, uncomprehending, and utterly misunderstanding way, in which Paul's agonised outbursts are sometimes stumbled at, even by some of our masters in Israel.

And no wonder, for the most complete and cruel captivity, the most utter and hopeless slavery you ever heard of, falls far short of being sold under sin. There is a depth of misery in being so sold there is a bleak and blank hopelessness in being so sold: nay, there is a certain self-revenging admission of justice in being so sold, that all goes to make up this uttermost agony of the self-sold slave. For he was not taken in honourable battle. He was not suddenly surprised and swept away into all this terrible captivity against his own will, and against all that he could do to resist and to escape. No. The gnashing agony of his heart all his days will be because he so sold himself. This will be the deepest bitterness of his bitterest cup. This will be the cruellest rivet of his most galling chain. And then to be sold under sin! The vilest and

cruellest savage chief who makes God's earth the devil's hell to himself and others, is not sin. Sin has made him what he is, and it has made his slaves and his victims what they are; but both his cruelty and their misery fall far short of the full cruelty and the full misery of sin. Sin could bring forth ten thousand hells like that, and it could still go on bringing forth as many more. Sin is sin. And the true saint of God feels that in his heart of hearts, till he scarce feels anything else. Till what all the whole life of a true saint sold under sin can be made in its agony, you may read in the seventh of the Romans; unless you have such an agony in your own bosom that the seventh of the Romans sounds flat and tame beside it. "What I hate, that do I!" Oh, no! That is no man of straw. That is no studied artifice of Pauline rhetoric. That is no young Pharisee. Oh, no, that is Paul the aged himself. That is the holy Apostle himself in all his unapproached holiness. Tragedies! Tragedies of hatred and of revenge! If you would see hatred and revenge red-hot, and poured, not on the head of a hated enemy, but, what I have never read in any of your stage-tragedies, poured in all its red-hotness in upon a man's own heart; if you would see the true hatred and the true revenge, come to this New Testament theatre. Come to Paul for a right tragic author. Or far better, come to holiness and heavenly-mindedness yourself, and then you will have this whole agony enacted in your own heart; and that with more and more passion

in your heart, all the days of your life on this hateful earth. My brethren, if you will believe me, there is nothing in heaven or on earth, there is nothing in God or in man, that from my youth up I have read more about, or thought more about, than just this text and its two contexts. And if the above interpretation is not the true interpretation of this text, then I must just admit to you in the very words of St. Augustine—"I confess that I am entirely in the dark as to what the Apostle meant when he wrote this chapter." Only, I will add this. Unless Paul contradicts me himself, not all his commentators on the face of the earth will ever convince me that this seventh of the Romans is not to be taken seriously, but is to be taken as filled with the spiritual experiences of a man of straw.

Now this is another sure rule of interpretation that whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope. And eminently to my mind the seventh of the Romans was written that those who need the very greatest patience and the very strongest comfort and consolation, may have all that here. And in this way. If even Paul was sold under sin: if even Paul when writing the Romans was still carnal: if he that very day had said and done and thought and felt what he would not if he could have helped it: if he hated himself for what came up upon him out of his heart even with his inspired pen in his hand: if sin still dwelt in him,

till in his flesh there dwelt no good thing . and, then, if we delight in the law of God after the inward man, as he did : even if we find another law, as we every moment do find it, warring against the law of our mind, and bringing us into captivity to the law of sin, till we cry without ceasing, O wretched man that I am ! and if all the time we thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord, and walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit till there is therefore no condemnation to us—if all that is so, I would like you to tell me where I can find another chapter so full of the profoundest, surest, most spiritual, and most experimental, comfort. I have not found it. I do not know it, much as I need it. No. In its own wonderful way there is not a more comfortable and hopeful Scripture in all the Book of God than this. And for my part, I will not let any commentator of any school ; no, not even of my own school, steal from me this most noble, and most divinely suited, cordial for my broken heart. As long as I am sold under sin I will continue to read continually this chapter, and all its context-chapters to myself, as all sent not to a man made of straw, but to a man made of sin, till he is every day sold under sin. "It was the saying of a good man, lately gone to his rest, whose extended pilgrimage was ninety-three years, that he must often have been swallowed up by despair, had it not been for the seventh chapter of Paul's Epistle to the Romans."

But if for the comfort and consolation of some men, this very same Scripture is written for the

warning and admonition of other men. And I accordingly admonish you, as many as need this admonition, and will take it at my hands, not to praise yourselves because you are not yet sold under sin. "Don't speak to me," said Duncan Matheson on the market-square of Huntly to David Elginbrod, "I am a rotten hypocrite." "Ah, Duncan man," said old David, laying his hand on his friend's shoulder, "they never say Fauch! i' the grave." And Holy Writ itself says that where no oxen are, the crib is clean. My brother, do not boast that you do not know what it is to be sold under sin, and that you do not believe it about Paul either. A born slave, with a slave's heart, and a slave's habits, never complains that he is a slave. He knows nothing else. He knows nothing better. He wishes nothing more than that his ear be bored for ever to his master's door. Only a free-born, and a nobly-born, man, and a man who has been carried away captive, ever cries continually, O wretched man that I am! The Talmud-men denied the sinfulness of their sinful hearts as indignantly as any of you can deny yours. And they interpreted the sixty-sixth Psalm to their scholars in the same way that some commentators interpret the seventh of the Romans. "If I regard iniquity in my heart only, then the Lord will pass it by, and will not regard it," so they taught their scholars.

But to return once more to the inexhaustible comfort of this text, and then close. There is no shame and no pain in all this world of shame and pain for one moment to compare with the shame

and the pain of the seventh of the Romans, as you do not need me to tell you, if you have that pain and shame in your own heart. But lift up your head, for it is to you and not to any other man, that God speaks in His holy prophet and says: "For your shame you shall have double. And for your confusion of face you shall yet rejoice in your portion. Therefore in your land you shall possess the double, and everlasting joy shall be unto you." Agrippa was shut up in a cruel and shameful prison for Gaius's sake; but no sooner did Gaius ascend the throne than he had his friend instantly released and conferred upon him an office both of riches and renown. Moreover Gaius presented Agrippa with a chain of gold of double the weight with the chain of iron that he had worn in the prison for Gaius's sake. And so has Paul's Emperor done long ago to Paul. And so will He do before very long to you. To you, that is, who are now sold under sin for His sake. You will soon hear His voice speaking in anger to your jailors at your prison door and saying how displeased He is over all your affliction. And He will bring you forth with His own hand like Gaius; and for all your shame and pain He will bestow upon you double, with a chain of salvation round your neck that will make you forget all the sad years of your sold captivity.

He comes the prisoners to release
In Satan's bondage held,
The gates of brass before him burst,
The iron fetters yield.

CXIX

PAUL'S BLAMELESSNESS AS A MINISTER

MOMUS himself could have found no fault with Paul. Momus found fault with everybody, with one exception. But had he lived in Paul's day Paul would surely have been a second exception to the universal fault-finding. For Paul so magnified his ministry; he so gave himself up to his ministry; he so laboured in season and out of season in his ministry; and above all he so pleased all men in all things for their good to edification; he so went about doing good and giving none offence that he lifted both his ministry and himself clear up above all the fault-finding of all fair-minded men. So much so that Paul stands next to our Divine Master Himself as a blameless model for all ministers, as well as for all other men of God. And both his own ministry and that of all his successors were so much on Paul's mind, that in every new Epistle of his he has given us something fresh and forcible as to how all ministers are to attain to a blameless ministry, till they shall

be able to give a good account of their ministry, first to their people, and then to their Master.

Now immediately following the text and intended to illustrate and to enforce the text, Paul lays down a remarkable map; it is a whole atlas indeed of all his past ministry. A moral and spiritual atlas that is. It is not a chartographer's atlas of all the parishes and presbyteries and synods in which Paul has lived and laboured. It is far more interesting and far more profitable to us than that. For it is nothing less than a faithful and feeling panorama of all the outstanding states of mind and passions of heart that he and his successive congregations had come through while he lived and laboured among them. Mr. Ferrier has lately given us an excellently-scaled and a most eloquent map of the parish of Ettrick. On that impressive sheet we are shown the situation of the church and the manse; the farm-towns where all Thomas Boston's elders lived who had a brow for a good cause; the hamlets also where he held his district prayer-meetings, and so on. And every inch of that minute map is a study of the foremost importance and impressiveness for all the parish ministers of Scotland. But Paul's pastoral map bites far deeper, and with far sharper teeth, into every minister's conscience than even Boston's mordant map will bite, though it is warranted to draw ordained blood also. Paul does not engrave topographically indeed all the cities, and all the synagogues, and all the workships, in which he had lived and

laboured. But he lays down with the greatest art the latitudes and the longitudes of all his trials, and temptations, and tumults as a minister. Instead of saying to us Here is Philippi, and here is Ephesus, and here is Corinth, and so on: Paul says to us Here were afflictions, and here were necessities, and here were troubles on every side. And just as in Thomas Boston's parish there are pillars and crosses set up to mark and to record to all time in Scotland his great victories won over himself, and his corresponding victories won over his people; so does Paul set up this and that great stone of ministerial remembrance and has had these instructive things engraved upon it: "by pureness, by knowledge, by long-suffering, by kindness, by the Holy Ghost, by love unfeigned, by the word of truth, by the power of God, by the armour of righteousness on the right hand and on the left." There are able and devoted divinity-students here to-night who look forward before very long to have a church and a manse and a pulpit and a people of their own. What would you say for a relaxation some day soon after the session is over to make a real geographical map of all the places where Paul was a preacher and a pastor; and then to distribute beside those sacred sites all the afflictions, the necessities, the distresses, the imprisonments, the tumults, and the labours of the text. And then on the other side of the sacred site, the pureness, the knowledge, the patience, and suchlike, by all of which your great forerunner and example-minister came out of it all

having given offence in nothing, but with an everlastingly honoured name. Such an exercise, taken in time, and laid to heart in time, would surely help you to take in hand some hitherto unheard-of parish in Scotland, so as to make it an Anwoth, or an Ettrick, or suchlike. There are hundreds of parishes in Scotland up to this day absolutely nameless, but to some one of which some one of you may yet marry your name for ever, till your parish and you shall shine together for generations to come, like the brightness of the firmament, and as the stars for ever and ever. You still have it in your own hands to-night to do that. But in a short time it will be too late for you also. Go, my sons, in God's name and in God's strength, determined, as much as in you lies, to give your happy people disappointment in nothing, and offence in nothing, till their children shall bury your dust in your own churchyard, amid the lamentations of the whole country-side, and shall write it over your dust that you were absolutely another Apostle Paul to them, both in your preaching of Christ crucified, and in your adorning of that doctrine.

"In tumults," is Paul's own specially inserted expression; it is his own most feeling and most expressive description, for long periods and for wide spaces of his apostolic life. "In tumults," he says with special emphasis. Now we all know in what New Testament books, and in what painful chapters of those books, all those tumults are written. But it would be no profit

to us to go back to-night on Paul's tumults, unless it were in order that we might the better lay our own tumults alongside of his, and lay ourselves in our tumults, alongside of Paul in his tumults. Well, then, come away, and let us do that. Come away, and let us speak plainly. What, then, have some of our tumults been, yours and mine, as minister and people, since we first knew one another? Was it Disestablishment? Was it Home Rule? Was it some heresy case? Was it the Declaratory Act? Was it the Union? Was it hymns, or organs, or standing at singing? or was it something else so utterly parochial, and petty, and paltry, that nobody, but you and I, could possibly have made a tumult out of it? Now whatever our tumult was, how did we behave ourselves in it? What are our calm thoughts about it, and about ourselves in it, now that it is all over? However it may be with you and me, it is certain that some men have gone to judgment, out of those very same tumults, with everlasting shame on their heads. How then do we stand in this matter of blame and shame? And blame and shame or no, are we any wiser men, and any better men to-day because of those tumults? Or after all our lessons are we just as ready for another tumult, and as ill-prepared for it as ever we were? Are we just as ill-read, and as ill-natured, and as prejudiced, and as hot-headed, and as full of pride and self-importance, as ever we were? What do you think? What do you feel? What do you say? You must surely see now

as you look back, what a splendid school for Christian character, and for Christian conduct, all those tumults were fitted, and intended of God, to be to you. Well then, how do you think you have come out of those great years in those great and costly schools? Has your temper and your character come out of those terrible furnaces like gold tried in the fire? For all those tumults whatever you may have made of them, and they of you, they were all intended to be but means to a far greater end than their own end. That is to say, they were all intended to test and try and prove you and me as both ministers and men of God, and that by the only proof we can give to God or man. The proof, that is, of patience, and purity of motive, and sufficient knowledge, and long-suffering, and love unfeigned, and the word of truth, and the power of God. And to show to all men, as Paul did, that we have not received the grace of God in vain; because, amid our greatest tumults, we have given offence in nothing, and in nothing has our ministry been to be blamed.

My brethren, you are not ministers, thank God for that. But you will let your ministers tell you what is in their hearts concerning you, and concerning themselves, as they read this too-proud chapter of Paul's. If you were all ministers I would go on to say in your name, and you would agree with me, as to what a cruel chapter this is. For once—what a heartless chapter! Was it not enough for Paul that he should enjoy his own good

conscience as a minister, but he must make my conscience even more miserable than it was before? What delight can it give him to pour all this condemnation and contempt upon me and my ministry? And, did he not know, did he not take time to consider, that he was trampling upon multitudes of broken hearts? I wonder at Paul. In so scourging the proud-hearted and uplifted Corinthians he must have forgotten all us poor ministers, who, to all time, would read his blameless and boasted ministry, only to be utterly crushed by it. It was not like Paul to glory over us in that way. But let us recollect ourselves, and say that it is all right. It is not for such as we are to be puffed-up, or even to be easy-minded, or to be anything else but bruised, and broken, and full of the severest self-blame. And, therefore, we will go back upon the ruins of our ministry with this self-condemning chapter in our hands, and will recall the tumults that so wounded the Church of Christ, and so many hearts in her, and all the unpardonable part we took in those tumults, that would never have been what they were had we not been in them. Our offences without number also in our very pulpits. Oh, my brethren, the never-to-be-redeemed opportunities of our pulpits; and the lasting blame of God and our people, and our own consciences, for our misuse and neglect of our pulpits! Rock of Ages, cleft for ministers! The "unedifying converse" of our pastorate, and so on: till we take up this terrible chapter, and read it continually,

deploring before God and man, to our dying day, all that Paul was, and that we were not: and all that he was not, and that we were. But, with all that is for ever lost, there is one thing left that we shall every day do; and a thing that Paul did not do, on that day at any rate, when he wrote this proud chapter. We shall every day walk about amid the ruins of our past ministry, and shall say over it—Out of the depths have I cried unto Thee, O Lord. If Thou, O Lord, shouldest mark iniquity, O Lord, who shall stand! Deliver me from blood-guiltiness, O God, Thou God of my salvation; then will I teach transgressors Thy ways; and sinners shall be converted unto Thee. There is always that left to us, and that is better for us, and far more becoming in us, than the most blameless ministry.

Thomas Goodwin, that great minister, tells us that always when he was tempted to be high-minded and to forget to fear, he was wont to go back and take a turn up and down in his unregenerate state. Now, your ministers do not need to go so far back as that. All that we need to do is to open a few pages of our Communion-rolls and visiting books, and a short turn up and down those painful pages, with some conscience, and some heart, and some imagination, will always make high-mindedness, and fearlessness, for ever impossible to us. You do not need to keep up our faults and failures and offences against us, for we never forget them for a single day. You may safely forgive us, for we shall never in this world

forgive ourselves. How could we? No other man can possibly have such a retrospect of faults and failures and offences as a minister. It is impossible. The seventh of the Romans has been called the greatest tragedy that ever was written in Greek or in English. If that is so, some of our Communion-rolls and pastoral-visitation books are not far behind it. For the supreme tragedy of his own sad ministry is all written there by each remorseful minister's own hand. And such tragic things are written, or, rather, are secretly ciphered there, as to raise both pity, and fear, and terror, to all ministers, enough to suffice them for all their days on earth.

Now, you may well think that Paul has left nothing at all for you to-night, but for ministers only. Well, take this, as if Paul himself had said it. Find as little fault with your ministers as is possible. Blame them as little as you can, even when they are not wholly blameless. It is not good for yourself to do it, and it is not good for your children to hear you doing it. Be like Bacon's uncle with his family; reprehend them in private and praise them in public. That is to say, if you have a minister who will take reprehension, either in public or in private, at your hands. But, even when it must be done, do it with regret and with reverence. Be careful not to humiliate your minister overmuch. I am sure you will never intentionally insult him, however much you may have to remonstrate with him. I admit that this lesson is not literally within the

four corners of the text, but it is not very far away from it.

And there is this also about offences, and fault-findings, and in a far wider field than the ministry merely. It is very humbling, when once we begin to discover it, that our very existence is an offence to so many men. We are like a stumbling-stone in their way: they fall on us and are broken, even when they could not explain or justify why that should be so; sometimes, again, our offensiveness will only be too easily explained both to them and to ourselves. But, at other times, they will need to go down into their own hearts for the real root of all this bitterness. And, then, when they do that, you will not be much more troubled with your offensiveness to them, or with their hostility to you. At the same time, walk you softly, as long as you are in this life. It is a dreadful thing to be the cause, guilty or innocent, of another man's stumbles and falls. "Love to be well out of sight," was the motto of more than one of the great saints. And, though that does not sound at first sight like great saintliness, yet it is. There are few better evidences of great and sure saintship, than just to "seek obscurity" for such reasons as the above. Keep out of people's eyes, and ears, and feet, and tongues then, as much as you can, and as long as you continue to cause so many men to stumble, and to fall, and to be broken over you.

And, then, both ministers, and all manner of men, never allow yourselves to answer again, when

you are blamed. Never defend yourself. Let them reprehend you, in private or in public, as much as they please. Let the righteous smite you: it shall be a kindness: and let him reprove you: it shall be an excellent oil, which shall not break your head. Never so much as explain your meaning, under any invitation or demand whatsoever. They just wish to pick a quarrel with you, and you have something else to do. Now, I always like to seal down such a great lesson as this by some great name. A great name impresses the most hardened hearer. And I will seal down this great lesson by this out of a truly great name. "It is a mark of the deepest and truest humility," says a great saint, "to see ourselves condemned without cause, and to be silent under it. To be silent under insult and wrong is a very noble imitation of our Lord. O my Lord, when I remember in how many ways Thou didst suffer detraction and misrepresentation, who in no way deserved it, I know not where my senses are when I am in such a haste to defend and excuse myself. Is it possible I should desire any one to speak any good of me, or to think it, when so many ill things were thought and spoken of Thee! What is this, Lord · what do we imagine to get by pleasing worms, or by being praised by creeping things! What about being blamed by all men, if only we stand at last blameless before Thee!"

CXX

PAUL AS AN EVANGELICAL MYSTIC

THE two words "mystical" and "mysterious" mean, very much, the same thing. Not only so, but at bottom "mystical" and "mysterious" are very much the very same words. Like two sister stems, these two expressions spring up out of one and the same seminal root. Now, as to mysticism. There are more kinds of mysticism than one in the world. There is speculative mysticism, and there is theosophical mysticism, and there is devotional mysticism, and so on. But to us there is only one real mysticism. And that is the evangelical mysticism of the Apostle Paul. And that mysticism is just the profound mysteriousness of the spiritual life, as that life was first created by the Holy Ghost in Jesus Christ, and will for ever be possessed by Jesus Christ as His own original life; and then as it will for ever be conveyed from Him down to all His mystical members.

Now, to begin with, Christ Himself is the great mystery of godliness. Almighty God never

designed nor decreed nor executed anything in eternity or in time, to compare, for one moment, for mysteriousness, with Christ. All the mysteries of creation,—and creation is as full as it can hold of all kinds of mysteries: all the mysteries of grace,—and grace is full of its own proper mysteries also: yet, all are plain and easy to be understood, compared with the all-surpassing mystery of Christ. Ever since Christ was set forth among men the best intellects in the world have all been working on the mystery of Christ. And, though they have found out enough of that mystery for their own salvation, yet they all agree to tell us that there are heights and depths of mystery in Christ past all finding out. Christ, then, that so mysterious Person who fills the Gospels and the Epistles with His wonderful words and works,—What think ye of Christ? Paul tells us in every epistle of his what he thinks of Christ, and it is this deep, spiritual, experimental, and only soul-saving, knowledge that Paul has of Christ, it is this that justifies us in calling him the first and the best of all mystics; the evangelical and true mystic: the only mystic indeed, worthy, for one moment, to bear that deep and noble name.

When you take to reading the best books you will be sure to come continually on such strange descriptions and expressions as these: Christ mystical; Christ our mystical Head; Christ our mystical Root; the mystical Union of Christ with all true believers; the mystical identity of Christ with all true believers,—and suchlike strange expres-

sions. But, already, all these deep doctrines and strange expressions of evangelical mysticism are to be found in the deep places of Paul: and, in his measure, in the deep places of John also; and that because those two apostles, first of all spiritually-minded men, discovered all these mysterious and mystical matters in their Master. Ere ever we are aware we ourselves are mystics already as soon as we begin to read in John about the Living Bread, and the True Vine; and in Paul about the Head of the Church and His indwelling in us. But Paul, after his great manner, goes on to show us that Christ is not the only mystical Head that this so mystically-constituted world of ours has seen. First and last, as that great evangelical and speculative mystic has had it revealed to him, there have been two mystical Heads set over the human race. Our first mystical Head was Adam, and our second mystical Head is Christ. Speaking mystically, says the most mystical of the Puritans, there are only two Men who stand before God; the first and the second Adam; and these two public Men have all us private men hanging at their great girdles. But, all the time, above Adam, and before Adam, and only waiting till Adam had shipwrecked his headship and all who were in it with him, stood the second Adam ready to restore that He had not taken away. And Paul so sets all that forth in doctrine, and in doxology, and in gospel invitation and assurance, that the Church of Christ in her gratitude to Paul has given him this great name of her first and most evangelical mystic.

"And hath put all things under his feet," proclaims the great mystic, "and gave Him to be the Head over all things to the Church, which is His body." And again, "Him which is the Head, even Christ, in whom the whole body maketh increase unto the edifying of itself in love." And again, "And He is the Head of the body: for it pleased the Father that in Him should all fulness dwell."

But while Paul has many magnificent things to teach us about the mystical Headship of Christ over His Church, at the same time, it is the mystical union of Christ with each individual believer, and each individual believer's mystical union with Christ,—it is this that completes and crowns Paul's evangelical doctrine and kindles his most rapturous adoration. And all that is so, because all Paul's preaching is so profoundly experimental. Paul has come through all that he preaches. Goodwin, that so mystical and so evangelical Puritan, says that all the "apostolical and primitive language was at once mystical and experimental." But there is a more primitive and a more experimental and a more mystical language than even the apostolical. "I am the bread of life: he that cometh to Me shall never hunger; and he that believeth in Me shall never thirst. This is the bread that cometh down from heaven, that a man may eat thereof and not die. Verily, verily, I say unto you, except ye eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, ye have no life in you." As also in our Lord's so mystical and so beautiful parable of the true vine and its true branches. And then in the

next generation, Paul comes forward with his own so profound experience of all that, and with his own so first-hand witness to all that, in such sealing and crowning testimonies and attestations as these:—"I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God." And, again, "To me to live is Christ, and to die is gain," and so on in all his epistles. Paul has so eaten the flesh and has so drunk the blood of Christ: he has been of the Father so engrafted into Christ, that he possesses within himself the very same life that is possessed by the risen Christ. The very identical life that is in Christ glorified is already in Paul, amid all his corruptions, temptations, and tribulations. There are very different degrees of that life, to be sure, in Christ and in Paul; but it is the very same kind of life. There is not one kind of spiritual life in Christ, and an altogether different kind of spiritual life in Paul. The same sap that is in the vine is in the branch. The same life that is in the head is in the member. But that is not all. Amazing as all that is, that is far from being all. The riches that are treasured up in Christ are absolutely unsearchable. For Paul is not content to say that he has in his own heart the identical and very same life that is in Christ's heart: Paul is bold enough to go on to say that he actually has Christ Himself dwelling in his very heart. I,—you and I,—have in our hearts the very same life that was in Adam, with all its deadly infection and dreadful pollution; but,

identified with Adam as we are, Adam does not really and actually dwell in our hearts. We still inherit the "fair patrimony" that he left us; but, I for one, both hope and believe, that Adam has escaped that patrimony himself. At any rate, wherever Adam dwells, he does not dwell in our hearts. But the second Adam is so constituted for us, and we are so constituted for Him, that He, in the most real and actual manner, and without any figure of speech whatever, dwells in us. Indeed, with all reverence, and with all spiritual understanding, let it be said, Christ has no choice; He has nowhere else to dwell. If Christ is really to dwell, to be called dwelling, anywhere, it must be in Paul's heart, and in your heart, and in my heart. Christ is so mystical and mysterious: He is so unlike any one else in heaven or earth: He is such an unheard-of mystery, that He has *three* dwelling-places. To begin with, He is the Son of God; and as the Son of God He dwells in the Father, and the Father in Him. And, then, ever since His Incarnation, He has been the Son of Man also. And as the Son of Man, and ever since His ascension and reception, He has dwelt in heaven as one of God's glorified saints, and at the head of them. But, over and above being both Son of God and Son of Man: from the mystical union of the Godhead and the Manhood in His Divine Person, He is the Christ also. And as He is the Christ, He dwells in His people, and can dwell nowhere else, in heaven or in earth, but in His people. Christ mystical is made up not of the

Head only, but of the Head and the members taken together. And, as apart from the Head the members have no life; so, neither apart from His members has the Head anywhere to dwell. Nay, apart from His members, the Head has no real and proper existence. At any rate, as Paul insists, they are His fulness, and He is complete in and by them; just as they again are complete in and by Him. Paul, and you, and I, hung, originally, and in the beginning, at Adam's mystical girdle, and we have all had to take the consequences of that mystical suspension. But now we have all been loosened off from Adam, and have been united close and inseparably to Christ. Before God, we all hang now at Christ's mystical girdle. Ay, far better, and far more blessed than even that, Christ now dwells under our girdle, and dwells, and can dwell, nowhere else. That is to say, in simple and plain language, He dwells in our hearts by faith and love on our part, and by mystical incorporation on His part. I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me. And, for this cause, I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith.

Now, as might be looked for, a thousand things, mystical and other, follow from all that, and will, to all eternity, follow from all that. But take one or two things that immediately and at once follow from all that, and so close this meditation. And first, the mystical union between Christ and the soul is so mysterious that it is a great mystery

even to those who are in it, and share it. As Walter Marshall, one of the greatest doctors in this mystery, has it: "Yea," says Marshall in his *Gospel Mystery*, "though it be revealed clearly in the Holy Scriptures, yet the natural man has not eyes to see it there. And if God expresses it never so plainly and properly, he will still think that God is speaking in riddles and parables. And I doubt not but it is still a riddle, even to many truly godly men, who have received a holy nature from God in this way. For the apostles themselves had the saving benefit of this mystery long before the Comforter had discovered it clearly to them. They walked in Christ as the way to the Father, before they clearly knew Him to be the way. And the best of us know this mystery but in part, and must wait for the perfect knowledge of it in another world." So mysterious is this mystery of godliness.

But how, asks some one honestly and anxiously, —how shall I ever become such a miracle of Divine grace as to be actually, myself, a member of Christ's mystical body? Just begin at once to be one of His members, and the thing is done. Your hands do not hang idle and say,—How shall we ever do any work? Your feet do not stand still and say,—How shall we ever walk or run? Nor your eyes, nor your ears. They just begin to do, each, their proper work, and the moment they so begin, your head and your heart immediately send down their virtue into your hands and your feet. And so is it with the mystical Head and His mystical

members. Just begin to be one of His members, and already you are one of them. Believe that you are one of them, and you shall be one of them. Just think about Christ. Just speak to Christ. Just lean upon, and look to Christ. Just go home to-night and do that deed of love, and truth, and humility, and brotherly-kindness, and self-denial, in His name, and, already, Christ is dwelling in you, and working in you as well as in Paul. Saul of Tarsus just said as he lay among his horse's feet,—Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do? and from that moment the thing was done.

Now, my brethren, if I have had any success to-night in setting forth Paul as an evangelical mystic, this also will follow as one of the many fruits of my argument. This fine word "mystical" will henceforth be redeemed in all your minds from all that dreaminess, and cloudiness, and unreality, and unpracticalness, with which it has hitherto been associated in your minds. "Vigour and efficacy" may not have been associated in many minds with the great mystical saints, and yet that is the very language that is used concerning them by no less an authority than Dr. Johnson. But just look at two or three of the greatest evangelical and saintly mystics for yourselves, and see if the great critic and lexicographer is not literally correct. Where is there vigour and efficacy in all the world like the vigour and efficacy of the Apostle Paul? Where is there less dreaminess or less cloudiness than in Paul? What a leader of men he was! What a founder and ruler of churches! What a

man of business he was, and that just because of his mystical oneness with Christ. What an incomparably laborious, efficient, and fruitful life Paul lived! What a mystical conversation with heaven he kept up, combined with what stupendous services on earth! Take Luther also. There is not a more evangelically-mystical book in all New Testament literature than Luther's Galatians. And yet, or I should rather say, and therefore, what truly Pauline vigour and efficacy in everything! And take Teresa and her mystical deacon always at her side, John of the Cross. I would need to be a genius at coining right words before I could describe aright to you that amazing woman's statesmanship and emperorship in life and in character. Founding schools, selecting sites, negotiating finances, superintending architects and builders and gardeners; always in the kitchen, always in the schoolroom, always in the oratory, always on horseback. A mother in Israel. A queen among the most queenly women in all the world. And, unjust as Dr. Duncan is to William Law our greatest English mystic, Duncan is compelled to allow about Law that "he spoke upon the practical as with the sound of a trumpet. In practical appeals Law is a very Luther. Luther and Law were Boanerges." And, as Dr. Somerville, our west-end neighbour says, from whose fine book on Paul I have borrowed the title of this lecture:—"The intensity that characterised the religious life and experience of the late General Gordon, was all due to his evangelical mysticism. All associated

in his case also with extraordinary efficiency in the practical affairs of life and in the management of men." But why argue out such remote and historical instances when we have it all within ourselves? Let any man among ourselves carry about Christ in his own heart; let any man abide in Christ as the branch abides in the vine: let any man cleave as close to Christ as a member of our body cleaves close to its head: let any man say unceasingly every day, and in every cross and temptation of every day, "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live: yet not I, but Christ liveth in me;" and you will be absolutely sure to find that man the most willing, the most active, the most practical, and the most efficient man in every kind of Christian work. In one word, the more evangelically mystical any man is, the more full of all vigour and all efficacy will that man be sure to be.

CXXI

PAUL'S GREAT HEAVINESS AND CONTINUAL SORROW OF HEART

PAUL'S all-but complete blindness to the beauties of nature and to the attractions of art, as well as his all-but absolute indifference to the classic sites and scenes of Greece and Rome, has been often remarked on, and has been often lamented over. Paul's utter insensibility has been often set in severe contrast to our Lord's much-applauded love of nature. Calvin also has suffered no little vituperation for sitting all day over his Institutes, and never once lifting up his eyes to give us a description of the Alps overhead. The prince of Scripture commentators will never be forgiven for never having once stood up in rapture over the sun-risings and the sun-settings on the eternal snows. Pascal also has come under the same condemnation because he could see no scenery anywhere much worth wondering at outside the immortal soul of man. And we are all at one in despising and spurning St. Bernard because he rode a whole day along the shores of the lake of Geneva

with his monk's cowl so drawn down over his eyes that he had to ask his host at sunset where that famous water was which he had heard so many people talking so much about. Now, I am not going to put forward any defence or excuse of mine for Paul's limitations and insensibilities. The very most I shall attempt to do is to offer you some possible explanation of that great heaviness of mind, and that great sorrow of heart, which has lost Paul the full approval of so many of his best friends. How was it possible for Paul to travel through those so famous scenes, how was it possible for him to live in those so classic cities, and never to give us a single sentence about persons and places, the very names of which make our modern hearts to beat fast in our bosoms to this day?

In vain to me the smiling mornings shine,
And reddening Phœbus lifts his golden fire;
The birds in vain their amorous descant join,
Or cheerful fields resume their green attire.
These ears, alas! for other notes repine;
A different object do these eyes require;
My lonely anguish meets no heart but mine,
And in my breast the imperfect joys expire.

Right or wrong; praise Paul or blame him; try to understand him, and to feel with him and for him, or no; the thing is as clear as day, that some iron or other has so entered Paul's soul, and an iron such, that it will never depart from his soul in this world. And, till that rankling spear-head, so to call it, is removed for ever out of Paul's

mind and heart in another world than this, say what you will to blame Paul, he has no ear left for the singing of your amorous birds, and no eye left but for that holy whiteness that so stains to his eyes both Mount Salmon and Mont Blanc. Master, said the holiday-minded disciples, see what manner of stones, and what buildings are here. But He turned and said to the twelve, I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how am I straitened till it be accomplished. The immense size of those stones, and the exquisite carving of their capitals, would have interested Him at another time, but His own time was now at hand: and so much so that He could see nothing else, all that terrible week, but Gethsemane and its cup, and Calvary and its cross. And, to come down to His great servant: when Mont Blanc was so full to him of the glory of snow and sunshine on many a Sabbath morning, Calvin was wont to boast it all back into its own place with this out of the Psalms,—"The hill of God is as the hill of Bashan; an high hill as the hill of Bashan. Why leap ye, ye high hills? This is the hill that God desireth to dwell in: yea, the Lord will dwell in it for ever;" and, so singing, Calvin went up again to Mount Zion. Cicero says somewhere that Plato and Demosthenes, Aristotle and Socrates, might have respectively excelled in each other's province, had it not been that each one of those great men was so absorbed in his own province. And Paul might have been a Christian Herodotus, and a New Testament Pausanias, had it not been for his own

absolutely absorbing province of sin and salvation from sin.

> All thoughts, all passions, all delights:
> Whatever stirs this mortal frame;
> All are but ministers of Love,
> And feed His sacred flame.

Among all the heathenish doxologies of her voluminous devotees, nature has never had half such a noble tribute paid to her true greatness, as Paul pays to her, in three verses of his immortal eighth chapter. All the true lovers of nature: that is to say, all the true worshippers, not of nature, but of Jesus Christ; have by heart, and have deep down in their heart, the famous but wholly unfathomable tribute. Listen to nature's truest prophet, and truest priest, and truest poet, the Apostle Paul. "For the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God. For the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of Him who hath subjected the same in hope. Because the creature itself shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the sons of God. For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now. And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the first-fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves, groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption." Match that, if you can, for a tribute to nature's true greatness. Match that, if you can, out of all your sentimental stuff. You

cannot do it. I defy you to do it. Pascal is constantly saying this of man, that man's great misery is the true measure of his greatness. Give me, therefore, Paul's profound lamentation over the bondage, and the vanity, and the groaning, and the travailing of nature; and over the shame, and the sin, and the misery of man her master. And, then, give me his magnificent prophecy over her evangelical future. To all of which profound pathos on the one hand, and to all of which magnificent hope on the other hand, your nature-worshipper's unbroken heart is utterly stupid and dead. Paul was such a great man, and such a great apostle of the Creator and Redeemer both of man and of nature, that, in their present state of sin and misery, and on that account, like his Master, he was a man of inconsolable sorrows. And yet babes at the breast will wail out against the insensibility of that mighty mind and mighty heart; will wail out at his insensibility and indifference to those toys and trifles that so sanctify and satisfy them, as they so often assure us. Whatever may be the true explanation of your entire satisfaction with nature, and with art, and with travel, and with yourself, this is undoubtedly the true explanation of Paul's great heaviness and continual sorrow of heart. The tremendous catastrophe of the fall of man, and the fall of all nature around man,—that, to Paul, was so ever-present and so all-possessing, that there is no alleviation of his awful pain of heart on account of all that. At any rate, there

is no alleviation or relief for him in the colour of the morning or evening sky, or in the shape of the hills, or in the music of the woods and the waters. Miserable comforters are all these things to Paul's broken heart; but, most miserable of all, your mountebank comforters among men, who would thrust things like these upon Paul's profound and inappeasable sorrow. "A man in distress," says John Foster, "has peculiarly a right not to be trifled with by the application of unadapted expedients: since insufficient consolations but mock him, and deceptive consolations betray him." The whole truth about Paul, above all other mortal men, is this. Paul is so intensely religious in his whole mind, and heart, and imagination, and temperament, and taste: he is so utterly and absolutely godly; he is such an out-and-out Christian man and Christian apostle: he is so consumed continually with his hunger and his thirst after righteousness: he is so captivated, enthralled, and enraptured with the beauty of holiness, that nothing will ever satisfy Paul, either for nature, or for art, or for travel, or for man, or for himself, short of the new heavens and the new earth. And until that day dawns, and that day-star arises in Paul's heart, whatever you and I may do, he will continue to look, not at the things that are seen, but at the things that are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal. Renan sometimes hits the mark in a manner that both surprises and rebukes us. "Paul," says that truly wonderful

writer, "belongs wholly to another world than this present world. Paul's Parnassus and Olympus; his sunrises and his sunsets; his whole Greece, and Rome, and Holy Land itself, are all elsewhere, and not here."

But not amidst nature and art and travel only, but amidst far better things than these, men like Paul are often made men of sorrow and of a heavy heart. "How, now, good friend, whither away after this burdened manner? A burdened manner indeed, as ever I think poor creature had. Hast thou a wife and children? Yes; but I am so laden with this burden, that I cannot take that pleasure in them as I once thought I would. Methinks, I am as if I had them not." A bold passage, but a right noble passage. A Paul-like passage. Paul had neither wife nor child, but he could not have written a better passage than John Bunyan's above passage, even if he had had as many children as John Bunyan had, and had loved them, and had wept over them, as only John Bunyan could love and weep. At the same time, it would have been an additional relief, and a real and a peculiar support to us, to have had a passage immediately from Paul's own pen on the heaviness of heart that cannot but accompany family life, when a man of Paul's sensibility, and of John Bunyan's sensibility, is at the head of that family. For Paul's most noble lamentation over the out-of-door creation is cold and remote, and is wholly without those bowels and mercies, that would have been stirred in Paul had he walked with a perfect

heart before his house at home. But in the absence of Paul on the profoundest aspects of family life, I know nothing better anywhere than the Pilgrim's reply to Mr. Worldly Wiseman; and, some time after, to Charity. To Charity, who, though like the Apostle she has no children of her own body, yet like him, her love, and her imagination, and her genius for the things of the heart, all make her speak to us like a mother in Israel, and all make John Bunyan to speak in reply to her like a father in the same. As Thomas Boston also has it in one of his Shakespearian passages: "Man is born crying, lives complaining, and dies disappointed from that quarter. All is vanity and vexation of spirit. But I have waited for Thy salvation, O Lord."

Why are the ungodly generally so jocund? asks Thomas Shepard. Partly, he answers, their want of understanding. They may be very eloquent on scenery, and on travel, and on art, and yet the scales may be on their eyes and the shell on their heads all the time as to anything deeper than the surface of things. Most men, he asserts, remain total strangers to themselves, and to their true spiritual state, all their days. And a little after that, this pungentest of preachers goes on to ask why the truly godly are ofttimes so much more sad and melancholy than other people? And among other deep answers he supplies himself and us with this deep answer,—It is not because they are too godly that they are so sad, but because they are not far more godly. They

have grace enough to bring them off from casual and worldly delights, but not enough to enable them to live upon the spiritual and eternal world, and to fetch all their comforts from thence. Grace has for ever spoiled their joy in the creature, but they are not yet grown so spiritual as to live upon God, and hence it is that they are found so often hovering in sadness and dissatisfaction between earth and heaven. Thomas Shepard's *Ten Virgins*, and his *Zacchæus*, are perfect mines of the profoundest and most experimental truth. Lord Brodie also will give us his testimony on this same subject out of his heavy-hearted diary. Brodie was not Paul, nor Pascal, nor Bunyan, nor even Thomas Shepard, but he had sufficient heaviness of mind and sorrow of heart to purchase him a right and a title to be listened to on this matter now in hand. "I never could allow myself," he says, "much exuberant joy in any created thing. But I have always exercised myself to hold every such thing soberly and ready to be surrendered up." And a far better man, our own dear Halyburton, has much the same thing to tell us. "The strong power of sin that I found still remaining in me, and the disturbances thence arising, made life not desirable; and a prospect of final and complete riddance by death, made death appear much more eligible."

But to come back before we close to what we began with, that is to say, the true place of nature in the religious, and especially in the Christian, life. And instead of offering you my own weak words

on such a high subject, take this classical passage out of the diary of Thomas Shepard's great pupil in the things of the soul, the greatest man, Dr. Duncan is inclined to think, since Aristotle. We all know the use that our Lord makes of nature in His preaching. Well, here are some examples of the uses that Jonathan Edwards makes of nature also. "Immediately after my conversion, God's excellency began to appear to me in everything—in the sun, in the moon, in the stars, in the waters, and in all nature. The Son of God created this world for this very end, to communicate to us through it a certain image of His own excellency, so that when we are delighted with flowery meadows and gentle breezes of wind we may see in all that only the sweet benevolence of Jesus Christ. When we behold the fragrant rose and the snow-white lily, we are to see His love and His purity. Even so the green trees, and the songs of birds, what are they but the emanations of His infinite joy and benignity? The crystal rivers and murmuring streams, what are they but the footsteps of His favour and grace and beauty? When we behold the brightness of the sun, the golden edges of the evening cloud, or the beauteous rainbow spanning the whole heaven, we but behold some adumbration of His glory and His goodness. And, without any doubt, this is the reason that Christ is called the Sun of Righteousness, the Morning Star, the Rose of Sharon, and the Lily of the Valley, the apple-tree among the trees of the wood, a bundle of myrrh, a roe, and a young hart. But we see the

most proper image of the beauty of Christ when we see the beauty of the soul of man." So far the greatest mind since Aristotle.

But, now that I have come to an end, I see now that I might have spared both you and myself also all this time and trouble. For our Lord's great words, "they began to be merry"; and the elder's great words that "God would wipe away all tears from their eyes"; those two Holy Scriptures, rightly understood, rightly imagined, and rightly taken to heart, would, of themselves, alone, have saved both you and me this long and superfluous discourse to-night.

CXXII

PAUL THE AGED

IT is calculated that the Apostle must have been somewhere between fifty-eight and sixty-four when he wrote of himself to Philemon as Paul the aged. Certain difficulties have sometimes been raised over the text. It has sometimes been asked whether Paul would have spoken of himself as an old man, say, at sixty, or sixty-three. But a thousand things may come in to make a man feel either old or young at that, or at any other age. The kind of life a man has lived; virtuous or vicious, religious or irreligious, idle or industrious, for himself, or for God and his generation, the state of his health, the state of his fortune, his family life, his disappointed or fulfilled hopes in life, and so on. Cicero wrote his *Cato* at sixty-three, and the great orator's design in that famous dialogue was to brace up those men around him whose knees were beginning to tremble, and their hands to hang down about that time of life. And Cicero goes on to fortify first

himself and then his readers, with such examples as those of Plato, who died at his desk at eighty-one; and Isocrates, who wrote one of his best books at ninety-four, and who lived another five years on the fame of it; and Gorgias the Leontine, who completed a hundred and seven years, and never to the end loitered in his love of work, but died leaving this testimony on his deathbed, "I have had no cause for blaming old age," he said. "I, myself," adds Cato, "supported the Voconian law at sixty-five with an unimpaired voice and powerful lungs." And, best of all, at the age of seventy, Ennius lived in such a heart as to bear nobly those two burdens, which are by most men deemed the greatest—poverty and old age. Ennius bore those two burdens with what seemed to all men around him the greatest goodwill. On the other hand, in annotating the text Bishop Lightfoot reminds us that Roger Bacon complained of himself at fifty-three as already an old man. And so too Sir Walter Scott lamented of himself at fifty-five as "a grey old man." Now it must be admitted that those two Christians do not come out at all well when set beside the brave-hearted heathens. Only, Dr. Samuel Johnson's shout must not be forgotten—Drink water, Sir, and go in for a hundred! And who himself drank water and went in for reading the best and writing the best, till he published his masterpiece after he was threescore and ten. Dante's old age in the Banquet begins at forty-five. But, on the other hand, Tacitus declares that if he had one foot in

the grave, it would not matter, he would still be reading and writing the best.

Now, with all his love and loyalty to Paul, and with all his perfect understanding of everything connected with Paul, for some reason or other, Luke all but completely fails us as Paul's old age approaches. "And Paul dwelt two whole years in his own hired house in Rome, and received all that came in unto him, preaching the kingdom of God, and teaching those things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ, with all confidence, no man forbidding him." These are Luke's very last words to us about Paul. I wish I could believe that these beautiful words described Paul's very last days down to the end. But when Luke, for some reason or other, drops into absolute silence, Paul's own Epistles of the Imprisonment come in to supply us with such affecting glimpses into the Apostle's last days as these. "I, Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ. For whom I am an ambassador in bonds. Be not ashamed of me His prisoner. For my bonds are manifest. This also thou knowest that all those that are in Asia be turned away from me. But the Lord have mercy on the house of Onesiphorus, for he oft refreshed me, and was not ashamed of my chain. For I am now ready to be offered up, and the time of my departure is at hand. Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world. Only Luke is with me. The cloke that I left at Troas, when thou comest, bring with thee, and the books, but especially the parchments." With one foot in the grave, like Tacitus,

Paul is still reading books and writing parchments. "At my first answer no man stood by me, but all men forsook me. Do thy diligence to come to me before winter." You see Paul forsaken, lonely, cold and without his cloke, chained to a soldier, and waiting on one of Nero's mad fits for his martyrdom. Well may Paul say, if in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable. But Paul has such an anchor within the veil that, amid all these sad calamities, old age and all, he is able to send out such Epistles of faith and hope and love as the Ephesians and the Colossians and the Philippians and the Pastorals and Philemon. Comparing the *Odyssey* with the *Iliad*, Longinus says, "If I speak of old age, it is nevertheless the old age of Homer."

I really wish I could prevail with you who are no longer young to put aside, as Butler beseeches you, your books and papers of mere amusement, and to read Cicero's *Cato*, and some of the other old age classics, if only to make those fine books to serve for so many foils in a fresh perusal of the Epistles of the Imprisonment. It is our bounden duty to read a Greek or a Roman masterpiece now and then, such as the *Phædo* or the *Cato*, if only to awaken ourselves again to the immensity of the change that came into this world with the Incarnation and the Resurrection of our Lord. What a contrast between philosophy at its very best in Socrates and Cicero, and the Gospel of our salvation unto everlasting life in Paul's old age

Epistles! The whole truth and beauty and nobility of such books as the best of Plato and Cicero is all needed the better to bring out the inconceivable contrast between this world at its very best before Christ, and the new heavens and the new earth that our Lord brought to this world with Him and left in this world behind Him. How such glorious passages as these shine out afresh upon us after we have just laid down the *Cato* and even the *Phædo*. Such well-known, but so little realised, passages as these: "Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life or by death. For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain. For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ, which is far better. For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body, according to the working whereby He is able even to subdue all things unto Himself. For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day; and not to me only, but unto all them also that love His appearing." What a man was Paul! If we did not know that this was Paul, we would certainly think that it was a Greater than even Paul. Really and truly, my brethren, it would be well worth your

putting yourselves to some expense and some trouble in order to read, say, the Consolations of Cato to your old age, and then to turn to Paul's consolations and comforts. Unless, indeed, you already read your Paul with such understanding, and with such imagination, and with such heart, that you do not need the assistance that Plato and Cicero were raised up and preserved to this day to give you.

Well; after repeated readings lately of the Cato, and the Epistles of the Imprisonment, and the Art of Dying Well, and Jeremy Taylor, and suchlike authors for old age, I will now tell you some of the reflections, impressions, and resolutions, that have been left in my own mind. And take first Paul's so touching message to Timothy about his cloke, and his books, and his parchments. For all that comes in most harmoniously after we have just been reading *Cato* about our keeping on reading and writing our best to the end. Lest you might not be able to lay your hands on what Calvin says about Paul's books, I will copy out the passage for you. "It is evident from this," says the prince of commentators, "that the Apostle has not given over study even when he is preparing himself for death. Where are those men then, who think that they have made so great progress that they do not need any more to persevere? Which of you will have the courage to compare yourself with the Apostle? Still more surely does this passage refute the folly of those fools who, despising

books, and neglecting all study, boast of their spiritual inspiration." And if I might be bold enough to add one word after Calvin. I am not now, alas! a neophyte in these matters, and I will therefore take boldness to say this to you. Read the very best books, and only the very best, and ever better and better the older you grow. Be more and more select, and fastidious, and refined, in your books and in your companions, as old age draws on, and death with old age. I wonder just what books they were that Paul missed so much in his imprisoned and apostolic old age at Rome. It might have been the *Apology*. It might have been the *Phædo*. It might have been the *Cato Major*. It could not possibly have been Moses, or David, or Isaiah, or Micah. You may depend upon it, Paul did not forget his Bible when he was packing his trunk at Troas. You are far better off in the matter of books for your old age than Paul was with his Bible and all. Never, then, be out of your Old, and especially, never be out of your New Testament. As Paul says about prayer, read in your New Testament without ceasing. Never lay it down, unless it is to take up another letter of Samuel Rutherford, or another pilgrim's crossing of the river; or, if you have head enough left for it, another great chapter of the *Saint's Rest*. Nothing else. At least, nothing less pertinent and appropriate to your years and to your immediate prospects. Nothing less noble. Nothing less worthy of yourself No-

thing at all but just those true classics of the eternal world over and over again, till your whole soul is in a flame with them, and till your rapture into heaven seizes upon you with one of them in your hand.

You may remember how a great divine as he grew old was wont, for that and for some other reasons, to go back now and then and take a turn up and down in his unregenerate state. As Paul also was wont to do. For as Paul grew older and saintlier, he the oftener would go back upon the sins of his youth. Paul was like William Taylor, who when asked of God what He would choose for a gift in his old age, answered, repentance unto life. And thus it is that if you are well read in Paul's old-age Epistles you will find far more repentance unto life in his last years, than even in his years of immediate conversion and remorse. You meet with an ever deeper bitterness at sin, and at himself, as time goes on with Paul: and, then, a corresponding amazement at God's mercy. And you will do well to be followers of the Apostle, and the Puritan, and the Presbyterian, in this sinner-becoming practice. Go back, then, deliberately and at length, and take many a good look at the hole of the pit you had dug for yourself, and in which you had made your bed in hell. And come up from the mouth of that horrible pit, and up to that rock on which you now stand, and see if the result will not be the same in you that it was in Paul and in those two most Pauline of preachers and writers;

see if it will not make you hate sin with a more and more perfect hatred, as also to make you long again, and as never before, to be for ever with the Lord.

And, not only read your very best, but pray your very best also, and that literally without ceasing. Yes, without one atom of exaggeration or hyperbole, always and without ceasing. If for no other reason than just to make up a little before you die for ever, for your long life, now for ever past, and in which you have found time for everything but prayer, and for every one but God. Or, have you no children or grandchildren to make up to them also for your neglect of their immortal souls? And have you in this matter ever considered God's acknowledged and accepted servant Job? How with him it always was so, that when the days of his children's feastings again came round, he sent and sanctified them, and rose up early in the morning and offered up burnt-offerings according to the number of them all. When do you offer up for your children, early in the morning, or late at night? Different fathers have different habits. Or, when you go back with Paul and take a turn up and down in your unregenerate state, do you ever come upon slain souls who are now under the altar, and who cry continually concerning you—How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost Thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth! Pray, O unforgiven old man! Pray without ceasing, all the time that is now left you. And who can

tell, if God will turn and repent, and turn away from His fierce anger against you, that you perish not.

And every day and every night over your Paul and your Bunyan and your Rutherford and your Baxter, and suchlike, practise, as they all did, your imagination and your heart upon Jesus Christ. Practise upon Him till He is far more real to you, and far more present with you, than the best of those people are who have lived all your days in the same house with you. Jesus Christ either is, or He is not. If He is not, then there is nothing more to be said. But if He is, then set aside every one else, and practise His presence with you, and your presence with Him. Imagine Christ. Make pictures by that splendid talent that God has given you for the very purpose of making pictures to yourself of Christ. Make pictures to yourself of your meeting with Christ immediately after death. Forefancy your deathbed, said Samuel Rutherford. Do you ever forefancy yours? It was the forefancying of his deathbed that was the conversion and salvation of that old man to whom Rutherford sent the letter. Do you ever forefancy your first meeting with Christ? How do you think He will look? How and where will you look? Rehearse the scene, and have your part ready. It is to the old alone, be it clearly understood, that these things are spoken. The young, and the middle-aged, and those who are busy with other things than preparing to meet with Christ, and with other books than the above

—they have plenty of time. But neither you nor I. Let us, at any rate, be up and doing. Santa Teresa felt a thrill go through her every time the clock struck on the mantelpiece. The same thrill, as she had been told, that all our earthly brides feel each time their slow clock strikes. An hour nearer seeing Him! she exclaimed, and clapped her hands. Up, all you old people, and be like her. Up, and make yourselves ready. Up, and abolish death. Up, out of your bondage all your days through fear of death. Up, and practise dying in the Lord, till you take the prize. Up, and read Paul without ceasing, and pray without ceasing, till you also shall stand on tiptoe with expectation and with full assurance of faith. Yes; up, till you also shall salute His sudden coming, and shall exclaim, Even so, come quickly, Lord Jesus!

CXXIII

APOLLOS

THE founding and the naming of Alexandria, its matchless situation, its architectural beauty, the rare wisdom of its statesmanship, and the splendid catholicity of its sacred scholarship,—all these things greatly interest us and greatly impress us. And all these things tell at once upon the text and serve richly to illustrate the text. For Apollos, though a Jew, was born in Alexandria, and received his education in Alexandria. The repeated dispersions of the Jewish people had filled the Jewish quarter of Alexandria with tens of thousands of that expatriated people, but everywhere an industrious, enterprising, and successful, people. By that time the Jews of Alexandria had almost the half of the whole city given up to themselves, and the Jewish merchants, and bankers, and scholars of Alexandria were, in all their several walks of life, in the very foremost rank. And, without in any way forsaking or forgetting the faith of their fathers, the Jews of Alexandria had opened their own minds, and the

minds of their children, to the best learning of that eminently learned city. Apollos, when an inquiring boy, would be taken up by his father to the famous synagogue every Sabbath day, where he would see the seventy elders sitting on their seventy thrones of gold, and where he would watch for the waving of the far-off flag that summoned the immense congregation to fall down at the same moment on their knees to say their Amen. On the week-days, and in spite of the fierce anathemas of the fanatical scribes of Jerusalem, young Apollos would be sent to school where he would learn to read Homer and Plato, as well as Moses and Isaiah. And in his holidays he would be taken out of the city to walk along the seven-furlong mole to the famous lighthouse island, on which the Sacred Septuagint had received its finishing touches. And as the talented boy became a student he would often find his way to the world-renowned library of Alexandria, into which had been collected the whole literature of the ancient world, sacred and profane; all the best books of Israel, as well as all the best books of Greece and Rome and Egypt and India.

It is not in our power to fix down the exact date of Apollos's birth, but we are quite sure of this, that he was a contemporary, and almost certainly a schoolfellow, of Philo the famous Hellenistic Hebrew of Alexandria. We possess no book of Apollos's authorship, unless Luther's bold guess is also a correct guess that Apollos wrote the Epistle to the Hebrews in his mature

years. And unless that other guess is also correct that he wrote the Book of Wisdom in his Alexandrian years. These, to be sure, are only guesses at his authorship, but the guesses of men of learning and genius have often far more truth in them than the proofs and certainties that satisfy less learned and less imaginative men. At the same time, if it is but an illuminating guess that we possess anything at all from Apollos's pen, we are quite sure about the many extant works of Philo. And so much alike were those two great contemporaneous men, that we can almost transfer to the one what we are told about the other. For, just as of Philo it may with absolute certainty be said that "he was a Jew, born in Alexandria, an eloquent man, and mighty in the Scriptures," so, on the other hand, it is no great stretch of the imagination to picture Apollos to ourselves as the author of *The Allegories of the Sacred Laws*, *The Theology of Moses*, and *The Indictment of Flaccus*.

Paul was not what we would call an eloquent preacher. The Apostle's detractors were wont to set Paul aside with this contemptuous sentence, that his bodily presence was weak, and his speech contemptible. But his greatest enemies could not say that about Apollos. Depth of mind and fluency of speech do not always go together. They did not go together in Moses and Paul, the two greatest men of the Hebrew race. But Apollos was both a man of a deep mind and of great oratorical genius. Quintilian, another contem-

porary of Apollos, has a fine chapter on this theme, that a great orator is just a good man well skilled in speaking. Now, Apollos satisfied both parts of that excellent definition also. For Apollos was first a good man, and then he was a skilful speaker. No man in the Apostolic Church was nearly such a skilful speaker as Apollos was. And the sacred writer is careful to add concerning Apollos that he was "mighty in the Scriptures" also. In saying that the sacred writer intends what he says to be all but the very highest praise that can possibly be given to Apollos. A great mind alone will not make a man mighty in the Scriptures. A great gift of oratory alone will not do it. It is the moral and spiritual qualities of the sacred orator, when they are added to his intellectual qualities, that make men confess his might when he handles the Holy Scriptures. The acknowledged might of Apollos in the pulpit was the might of conviction and of character; it was the might that has its seat in the conscience and the heart of a good man, taken together with that other might of a great intellect and real eloquence. The great might of Aristotle and Quintilian combined would still have left Apollos weak as other men in the things of God, unless there had been united with all that the might of a conscience on fire against all unrighteousness, and of a heart on fire with the love of all truth and all goodness. Apollos has much still to learn, but this is a right noble foundation on which to build up a great preacher of the Gospel: "a Jew, born in Alexandria, an eloquent

man, and mighty in the Scriptures"; so far, that is, as he as yet understands the Scriptures.

This then was the Alexandrian scholar and orator who came to Ephesus on an Old Testament mission immediately after Paul had left that city. Paul and Apollos had no acquaintance as yet with one another. They had never met, and though they were both great preachers, they did not at all preach the same Gospel. With all his Alexandrian learning, and with all his finished eloquence, and with all his knowledge of Moses and Isaiah and John the Baptist, Apollos knew nothing, or next to nothing, of Jesus Christ. How Apollos had come to know so much as he did know, we are not told; but we are told distinctly that his knowledge came to an end with the preaching and the baptism of John, the son of Zacharias and Elisabeth. It perplexes us to be told that about such a man as Apollos was. That such a universal student, and such a lover of all kinds of truth, and especially of revealed truth, should have lived so long in the very metropolis of all intelligence, and not have got beyond the school of John—that quite staggers us about Apollos. At the same time, we must remember that with all his marvellous activity and success, Paul had never been so far as Alexandria. If Paul had preached Christ even once in that magnificent synagogue, what a chapter we would have had in the Acts of the Apostles about Paul's conversations with Apollos. But as it was, Apollos was still preaching just as John had both preached and baptized twenty years before at Bethabara

beyond Jordan. John's doctrines and exhortations were preached by Apollos with tremendous passion and impressiveness; with all John's own tremendous passion and impressiveness; and with a polish of manner and a perfection of style to which John was an utter stranger. But that was all the preaching that Aquila and Priscilla listened to Sabbath after Sabbath, as Apollos stood up in the pulpit of Ephesus. Sabbath day after Sabbath day, Aquila and Priscilla came up to the synagogue and listened to Apollos preaching John; and every returning Sabbath day they listened to him with increasing regret that he had not come to Ephesus in time to have heard Paul preaching Christ. With a weekly increasing distress they listened to what they heard, or rather, did not hear, till, at last, they took Apollos and expounded unto him the way of God more perfectly.

Such then is this so beautiful passage, and so full of all manner of lessons for students, for young preachers, and for old people. And first, for old people, and for people far on in the spiritual life. I can overhear Aquila and Priscilla on their way home from the synagogue Sabbath after Sabbath; or, rather, I can overhear them after their children are asleep. For you may depend upon it, Aquila and Priscilla did not discuss Apollos's sermons at the church door or at the dinner table. Was that a good sermon to-day, father? asked young Keble. All sermons are good, my son, answered his wise father. And Aquila was like old Keble. All the way home from church Aquila talked to his sons and

daughters about Alexandria and her schools; about the Septuagint; about Apollos's great learning and great eloquence; about the work that he had laid out on that sermon; about his noble style; about his commanding manner, and about the great lessons to be learned from every sermon of his. And then, when the Sabbath was over, and they were alone, Aquila and Priscilla would open their minds quite freely to one another about the young preacher. Now how would we have done had we been in Aquila's and Priscilla's place? This is what we would have done. We would have let the whole congregation see what we thought of Apollos. We would have shifted about in our seat. We would have looked at the clock. We would have held down our head. We would have covered our eyes with our hands. We would have glanced at our neighbours to see how they were taking it all. We would have smiled sadly, so that all might see us. And then, at the door—"How did you like him? Poor boy! he does not know the very A B C of the Gospel!" And so on, till it would all have been told to Apollos, and till we had ruined our influence with him, and his influence with us and with our children for ever. How Aquila and Priscilla managed it I cannot imagine. But manage it they did, for "they took Apollos unto them," says the sacred writer, "and expounded unto him the way of God more perfectly." "An old and simple woman, if she loves Jesus, may be greater than our brother Bonaventure."

I admire all the three so much, that I really do

not know which to admire the most; Aquila and Priscilla in their quite extraordinary wisdom and tact and courage, and especially love; or Apollos in his still more extraordinary humility, modesty, and mind of Christ. A shining student of Alexandria, a popular and successful preacher, not standing-room when he preached in the synagogue, followed about by admiring crowds, and with many seals to his ministry among them; such a famous man to be taken to task about his pulpit work by two old workers in sail-cloth and carpets, and to be instructed by them how to preach, and how not to preach—"the whole thing is laughable, if it were not for its impudence." So I would have said had I been in Apollos's place. But like the true Alexandrian he was, and the true preacher, and the true coming colleague and successor of Paul, Apollos instantly saw who and what he had in Aquila and Priscilla. In a moment he felt they were by far his superiors in the things of the pulpit at any rate, and he at once made it both easy and successful for them to say to him all that was in their minds and hearts. I would far rather have Apollos's humble mind and quiet heart at that supreme moment of his life than all his gold medals, first-class certificates, and all his crowds to boot; the noble young Christian gentleman that Apollos at that moment proved himself to be.

It was their own experience of the way of God that enabled and authorised Aquila and Priscilla to take Apollos and teach him that way more perfectly. It was not Paul's preaching that did

it. Their own experience, in their case, went before Paul's preaching, accompanied it, and came after it. They knew the doctrine of Christ perfectly because they had lived the life of Christ perfectly. Tent-makers as they were, and wholly unlettered as they were, they received it as soon as it was written, and read and quite well understood the Epistle to the Ephesians, because they had all its deep mysteries already in their own hearts. Paul in his best preaching had only told Aquila and Priscilla, with all his authority, what they knew to a certainty before. Every true preacher comes on the same thing continually among his people. And every wide reader of such literature knows where to find illustrations of the same thing. Brother Lawrence, the humble cook, instructing the theologians of his day about the practice of the presence of God; Jacob Behmen enlightening William Law; Thomas Boston's old soldier giving his minister a loan of "The Marrow"; and Cowper's poor Cottager. But the classical passage is in *Grace Abounding*. "Upon a day the good providence of God did cast me to Bedford to work on my calling; and in one of the streets of that town I came where there were three or four poor women sitting at a door in the sun, and talking about the things of God; and being now willing to hear their discourse, I drew near to hear what they said, for I was now a brisk talker myself in the matters of religion. But I may say, I heard, but I understood not; for they were far above, out of my reach. Their talk was about a new birth,

the work of God in their hearts, also how they were convinced of their miserable state by nature. They talked how God had visited their souls with His love in the Lord Jesus, and with what words and promises they had been refreshed, comforted, and supported against the temptations of the devil. And, methought, they spoke as if joy did make them speak; they spoke with such pleasantness of Scripture language, and with such an appearance of grace in all they said, that they were to me, as if they had found a new world, as if they were people that dwelt alone, and were not to be reckoned among their neighbours. Therefore I should often make it my business to be going again and again into the company of these poor people, for I could not stay away. And presently I found two things within me at which I did sometimes marvel; the one was a very great softness and tenderness of heart; and the other was a great bending of my mind to a continual meditating on them, and on all other good things which at any time I had read or heard of." All that might have been found in the best Alexandrian Greek among Apollos's papers after his death. Better Greek he could not have written, nor a better description of his experiences as he came and went to Aquila's and Priscilla's house in Ephesus. "By these things," adds Bunyan, "my mind was now so turned that it lay like a horse-leech at the vein, still crying out, give, give."

They complain that there threatens to be a dearth of candidates for the Christian ministry.

But that can never be. For where can the flower of our youth find a field for their scholarship and for their eloquence like the evangelical pulpit? What other calling open to a talented young man can compete with spiritual preaching? What other occupation can possess and satisfy a pure mind and a noble heart, and that more and more, to the end of life? Where will our intellectual youth find a literature for one moment to compare with the literature of Jerusalem and Alexandria? And a sphere of work like a congregation full of such people as Aquila and Priscilla? How long halt the flower of our Scottish youth between two opinions? If the Lord be God, follow Him. But if Baal, then follow him. Choose ye this day whom ye will serve. Will ye also go away? Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life.

CXXIV

LOIS AND EUNICE

THIS Lois was a God-fearing woman herself, and a woman of a strong and an unfeigned faith. But with all that she made the tremendous mistake of giving her only daughter in marriage to a man who was still an absolute heathen. How such a good woman, how two such good women, could have fallen into this tremendous trap, we can only guess. But, then, we can guess; ay, and that only too well. For Eunice's lover, like so many of our own lovers, would begin to attend the synagogue-services for her sweet sake, till he was almost persuaded to become a proselyte of the gate for her sweet sake. And, but for some pagan and overpowering influences holding him back, under the transforming influences of Lois's noble character and Eunice's holy beauty he would surely have become all that Lois and Eunice prayed for so unceasingly that he might become before the marriage. But let Lois only give her consent; let Lois only give her dear daughter to him in marriage; and she will never have to repent

putting her great trust in his hands. And the young Greek lover was not a false-hearted and a designing cheat in so saying. He really and honestly intended, after he was married, to live a godly husband's life. He said so, and Lois and Eunice believed him, and I believe him. We have all come through it ourselves. We have all had our own experiences of this self-deceivingness of a young man's heart. We have all ourselves seen and come through enough to convince us that Eunice's lover was entirely honest and honourable, as we ourselves were, when he said what he intended to be and to do as soon as he was a married man. Yes, we have all seen all that a thousand times, till we can sympathise, with all our heart, with all the three. That is to say, with the ardent and almost sanctified Greek lover, and with the two still-hesitating, but fast-yielding, Hebrew women. Till at last when she could hold out no longer, Lois gave her long-withheld consent to the mixed marriage. And in this way Eunice, a daughter of Abraham, became the married wife of this still heathen man; his wife, and in due time the mother of his uncircumcised sons. And he became her husband and her lord and the father of her children, still remaining all the time the same heathen man he had always been. And, alas! not only the same heathen man he had always been, but as time went on, and as his married life became a familiar possession and a disenchanted experience to him, he went further away from God and from family religion than ever he had been before. Nor did

Peter's beautiful promise ever come true so as to mend matters in that so mixed and so unequally-yoked marriage. Peter's so beautiful promise to all good women when they waken up to see how they have sold themselves, and where they have landed themselves. "Likewise, ye wives, be in subjection to your own husbands, that if any obey not the Word, they also may without the Word, be won by the conversation of the wives, while they behold your chaste conversation coupled with fear." For some reason or other, that so apposite promise was never fulfilled to that so mismanaged marriage. Whether it was that Lois failed in her part as a mother-in-law, as she had so conspicuously failed as a mother; or whether it was that Eunice failed in fulfilling her part of the Apostle's promise; or whether it was owing to the pride and the obstinacy of the heathen heart of her husband; whatever was the cause, the father of Eunice's goodly child never came to walk with a perfect heart before his house at home. He was never won, as at one time he so solemnly promised that he would be won, and at that warm-hearted time actually was almost won, to his believing wife's Holy Scriptures and to her God and Saviour.

Now nine women out of ten would simply have accepted Eunice's fate, and would gradually have sunk down to their husband's unbelieving level. But neither Lois nor Eunice were such weak women as that. Instead of that, and especially after the birth of little Timothy, the two God-fearing women set themselves all the more to a far more Scriptural,

a far more prayerful, and a far more obedient, life than ever before. They did not cast up the days of their husband's love-making to his accusing conscience. Neither did they thrust their own repentance and remorse too much in his face. But neither did they hide out of his sight that divine faith and that domestic piety which had been the mainstay of their hearts before ever they had seen his face, and which was more than ever their only mainstay now that he had so fatally misled them. And the daily growth of the uncircumcised child only made the broken law of God against all such mixed marriages as theirs had been the more poignant to their broken hearts: as also, the same law of God as to the proper nurture and admonition of such unhappy children as their child was. The confirmed, and now hopeless, heathenism of the child's father, and the everpresent remorse of their own hearts, only made both Lois and Eunice determine to work with all their might in order to make up somewhat to their innocent child for the great wrong they had all three done to him. And that the two sorely chastened women succeeded in all but completely compensating their spiritually fatherless child, we have Paul's own testimony to that, and a testimony that Timothy must all his days have read with tears and thanksgivings. "Thou Timothy from a child hast known the Holy Scriptures, and that because of the unfeigned faith that dwelt first in thy grandmother Lois, and then in thy mother Eunice, and I am persuaded in thee also." And thus it came about that Timothy,

unhappy enough in his birth, and handicapped enough in starting on the race of life, was more than compensated for all that through the labours and the prayers of his mother and his grandmother, and through the beneficial operation of that noble New Testament law,—"He is not a Jew who is one outwardly: neither is that circumcision which is outward in the flesh. But he is a Jew who is one inwardly: and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter: whose praise is not of men but of God."

That noble passage also in which the Apostle describes to Timothy his own upbringing is a classical passage to all Christian households. "But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned, and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them. And that from a child thou hast known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation, through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness. That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works." "Wise unto salvation." There is a whole volume of the inner history of that Greek-Hebrew household in those four verses, and in those three words that shine like an apple of gold in a picture of silver, at the heart of those four verses. The Greek father's bad conscience because he had never even tried to fulfil to those two over-trustful women what he had so often so solemnly promised

them ; his bad conscience would often exasperate his temper at them, and at the Scriptures they were always reading. He had his own Scriptures ; and he was not wholly without excuse for exalting them as he did. Only, all his Greek and Roman Scriptures taken together could not give him peace of mind for the wrong he had done those two women. Nor could Lois and Eunice get the comfort and support they so sorely needed, out of any other Scriptures but the Psalms of David, and the promises of the Hebrew prophets. It was with Lois and Eunice's son as it was with the son of another self-deceived wife and mother long afterwards. The handwriting which was against us, which was contrary to us, is blotted out. This assurance the Platonic writings contain not. Plato's pages, with all their beauty, and all their wisdom, present not the image of this piety—Thy sacrifice, O Lord, is a broken heart. No man sings in Cicero or Plato—From Thee cometh my salvation. No one hears this call out of those books—Come unto Me all ye that labour." Not that it was young Timothy's time as yet to understand such deep and such spiritual Scriptures as these. But his time is coming when all Plato, and all Cicero, and all else, will no more satisfy his soul than they satisfied the soul of Monica's son. But that is still in the far and the unknown future. Timothy is still at that early stage of soul of which John Bunyan writes : "Wherefore falling into some love and liking for those things, I betook myself to my Bible, and began to take great

pleasure in reading it; but especially with the historical part thereof. For, as for Paul's Epistles, and such like Scriptures, I could not away with them." Paul's Epistles were not written as yet in Timothy's youth, and he had no temptation to contemn them. But many were the delightful Sabbath hours that Lois his grandmother spent with Timothy her dawning grandson, over Bunyan's favourite Scriptures; over Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and Joseph, and David, and Solomon. When, as he grew in wisdom, she would show him how all those great men of his mother's and his grandmother's Scriptures became wise unto salvation. As also, where they became foolish, and risked their salvation. Especially Solomon, who was in everything, except his salvation, the wisest of them all. Little did Lois dream as she went on with her pious occupation that she was thereby writing her name so impressively on the immortal pages of our New Testament. Little did she dream that we would actually be reading about her, and about her daughter Eunice, and about her grandson Timothy, in this far-off island of the sea. Little did that devout and chastened saint think that many of us in this congregation to-night would carry home lessons of salvation from her house to our own house at home. Great and marvellous are Thy works, Lord God Almighty: just and true are Thy ways, Thou King of Saints.

There is a piercing cry in this connection that often comes to my own heart out of one of Lois's Hebrew Psalms. And that heart-piercing and

heart-uttering cry is this, "O, when wilt Thou come unto me? I will walk within my house with a perfect heart." I know the man who first uttered that cry to God. I see his house at home, as well as I see my own. And, more than that, I see him before he had a house. I see, and hear, and share in all his holy dreams, and high hopes, and solemn vows, and in all his protestations and resolutions. I made them all myself, and far more. But no sooner did that Hebrew bridegroom get the desire of his heart than he soon became a still worse husband than Eunice's Greek husband, and a still worse father than Timothy's father. And now so beset is he behind and before with his badly performed part as a husband and a father, that, O wretched man that he is, he is every day doing and saying things he ought not to do and say; doing and saying things that drive him to downright despair. No reformation prospers that he attempts. Everything seems to be bent against him in his life at home. And nowhere else so much as in his life at home. Till we come on this heart-breaking cry of his in our hundred-and-first psalm. Just as Eunice's husband and Timothy's father would have cried all his days, had he begun to look at himself as a husband and as a father in the glass of his wife's Holy Scriptures. For those Scriptures, while holy in everything, are in nothing more holy than just in the incessant and the inexorable demands they make on every husband, and father, and master, who reads them. How hard it is, but how heavenly

good it is, to look continually at ourselves as householders in this glass of God that stands at this moment shining before us and searching us! How wise unto salvation it will yet make both ourselves and our households, if we will lay up in our hearts and practise in our lives the lessons even of this one Scripture we have had from the God of families to-night. And this great good will begin to-night with all those of us who are honestly asking ourselves before God, just what things they are, naming them, in which we have so sorely disappointed those who once so trusted us. Just in what things, and naming them, we have come so shamefully short of our marriage-vows, and of our honest, and at one time, warm-hearted, intentions. To accustom ourselves to make such an inquisition as that, will do this at any rate—it will teach us humility at home, and that is the beginning of all true reformation there. It will teach us patience also, which is so much needed at home. And it will give us a sore heart all our days for those whose unhappy lot it is to live all the rest of their days under our roof, and to have us for all the husband, and all the father, they are ever to have in this world.

And O you who are still full of promises, and vows, and fond intentions! You who cannot listen to God's severe truth to-night with patience, you are so full of ardent dreams about what a house of love, and honour, and religion, your house is to be! Begin, I beseech you, to-night, to make yourself what you are one day to make your happy

house. It is far easier, believe me, to begin all these good things before your marriage than after it. I can tell you that; nobody better. But if you will not believe me, believe Lois and Eunice. For they are come here to-night to warn you against a mixed marriage like theirs. Be ye not unequally yoked! Both the grandmother and the mother are come here to-night to plead with you, with all their experience, and with all their authority.

But whatever other men and women, young and old, may do, this is what I, the present preacher, will do even if I do it alone,—I will sing of mercy and judgment. Unto Thee, O Lord, will I sing. I will behave myself wisely in a perfect way. O when wilt Thou come unto me? I will walk within my house with a perfect heart. I will often return to the days of my youth. I will often return to the days of my warmth of heart, and of my many prayers in this matter, and my many vows. I will tell to my own heart all the steps in which Thou hast led me up to this present time. I will say, As for me and my house, we will henceforth serve the Lord. And one thing will I do; I will keep my heart well broken before Thee, and before my house all my days. I will clothe myself with humility as I go in and out before my house. I will put a bridle in my mouth. I will keep the door of my lips. I will not provoke my children to anger. I will reprehend them in private, and praise them in public. I will look on all their faults as what they have inherited from their

father; and on all that is good in them as having come to them from their mother, and from their Father in heaven. The sins of my children shall always be their father's sorest chastisement at the hand of God, and their gifts and their graces shall always be his highest ornament and his greatest renown. O when wilt Thou come unto me?

CXXV

TIMOTHY AS A CHILD

IT was something like this. It was something not unlike one of our own Scottish households where the father is not a church member, and where the minister is so strict that he will not baptize the child to the mother. In which case the grandmother and the mother would say to one another—'Very well. At any rate we shall all the more see to it that if our child wants the outward ceremony he shall have that want more than made up to him in the inward substance. What he has not received in the mere sprinkling with water, he shall, if we can help it, have it more than made up to him by the Holy Spirit. For we shall give God no rest till he has had far more mercy on our innocent child than our cruel-hearted minister has had.' And it was so. Till the very heathenism of Timothy's father was far better for his uncircumcised child than if that Greek father had been such a Christian father as the most of our fathers are. For just because of the father's unbelief, the faith of the grandmother

and the mother became all the more unfeigned, and prayerful, and importunate. The blot they had all three had such a hand in bringing upon their innocent child, lay so heavy on the heart of his mother and his grandmother that they could take no rest till they had seen that blot more than removed by the washing of regeneration, and the renewing of the Holy Ghost.

With such an unfeigned faith as that the two lonely women set themselves to bring up their little fatherless son in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. And they succeeded, if ever unfeigned women succeeded. And such unfeigned women as they were have always succeeded, and will always succeed, till the last of such women shall be called up to get her full wages from God. Such women, such mothers in Israel, as Hannah, and Elisabeth, and Mary, and Monica, and Halyburton's mother, and Wesley's mother, and the mother of Jonathan Edwards's children, and the mother of Thomas Boston's children, and many more. And in all those mothers it was their unfeigned faith that did it. Their unfeigned faith laid hold, first on God, and then on their children. For, not to speak of God, this kind of faith, and this kind of faith alone, takes hold of a child's heart. You cannot feign faith before your children. Even while they are still children they will find you out to their great pain and shame on account of their feigning mother. You may go on feigning faith with some success before every one else, but not before your children. You must walk with an unfeigned

faith, and with a perfect heart at home, if you have such a child's eyes set on you as were set on both Lois and Eunice. Whatever the husbands and the fathers in our households may do, let all wives and mothers live a life like the lives of Lois and Eunice, and they will have their reward. At this point, and in a spare moment, I was led to take down an old favourite of mine who has always something pertinent to say on this matter now in hand. "Before all things, let the talk of the child's nurse not be ungrammatical." He is discussing the best education for an orator. "Chrysippus wished that every such nurse should be, if possible, a woman of some liberality of education. For it is his nurse the future orator first hears speaking, and it is her words and her accents he will first imitate. We are by nature tenacious of what we have imbibed in our infant years, just as the flavour with which we scent our casks when they are new, remains in them to the end." With a few changes and substitutions you have Lois and Eunice in Quintilian's First Book, and their early education of a future apostle.

It is not for nothing, you may depend upon it, that Paul gives Lois and Eunice such a first-class certificate for their first-rate methods, and for their signal success in teaching Timothy to read, and so far to understand, the Holy Scriptures. Paul always, and to everybody, both spoke and wrote like the true gentleman he was. But these are not so many mere courtesies and compliments

that the aged Apostle pays to these two Bible-teaching women. There is a studied descriptiveness, as well as all his own warmth of heart, in what Paul here says to Timothy about the wise and painstaking methods that Lois and Eunice took with him over Holy Scripture. It is of his early readings of Holy Scripture at home that Paul reminds Timothy when he exhorts him to divide the word of truth rightly, both in his own family, and in his catechumen's classes, and in his expository pulpit. I see Lois putting on her spectacles an hour before she summons in Timothy from the playground. I watch her as she selects with such care the proper passage she is going to read with him. I admire her as she reads and re-reads the passage to herself, in order to make sure that she understands it herself. After which she prepares, and tries them over on her own knees, two or three petitions proper for the child to repeat after her, and to which he is to say his intelligent and hearty Amen. There is much that is full of rebuke and instruction to us all in the manse of Ettrick. But there is nothing more full of rebuke and instruction to us than the way that Thomas Boston prepared himself for family worship before he rang the bell. And as a consequence and a reward he records it again and again in his grateful diary, how, after such preparation he often got light, and comfort, and strength, and guidance for himself, as well as for his family, out of "the exercise." 'Remember the wise methods of Lois and Eunice, said Paul to Timothy, 'when you are at your own

family worship at home, as well as when you are at the head of a congregation.'

But with all these most excellent preparations for it, the great change had still to come to Timothy. "Towardly child as Timothy was," says Thomas Goodwin, "he was all the time unconverted." Timothy was kept for Paul to finish the work that Lois and Eunice had so well begun. There is a great instruction here, and a great comfort. A very great comfort. For there are a great many young men among ourselves exactly like Timothy. Like Timothy they are richly talented, well-educated, religiously educated, and every way well brought up, young men. Like Timothy also they have received all that two generations of mothers of an unfeigned faith can do for them. And yet all the time they have not themselves taken the great step. And this goes on till one day their day of grace at last comes to them, as Timothy's day of grace came to him. A new minister stands in the pulpit; a skilful and urgent evangelist like Moody, or Drummond, or Kelman, or M'Neill, or George Clarke, or Mackay, visits the city and specially addresses such young men; or they are lead to read the right book at the right moment; or some special and personal dispensation of Divine Providence is sent to them. Till, in a day, in an hour, in a moment, the fine fruit that has for so long been slowly ripening falls at a touch into the husbandman's basket. Paul comes round and preaches one day at Lystra, and Timothy is converted on the spot. Keep up your hearts,

Lois and Eunice. Keep up your hearts. Though it tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry. Behold, the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receive the early and the latter rain. Be ye also patient; stablish your hearts; for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh.

At the same time, while I rejoice with Paul that he had Timothy for his spiritual son, I cannot but feel tenderly for Lois and Eunice in this matter. I feel for Eunice especially, that she was not blessed of God to bear her son in his second birth as well as in his first birth. Speaking for myself, I would value above all else that God can give me in this world to see all my children truly converted like Timothy. And I would rejoice to receive their conversion through any instrumentality that it pleases God to employ. A new minister; a passing-by evangelist; a good book; a dispensation of family or personal providence; or what not. But O! if it pleases God let me have all my children's souls myself! Let them all say in after days—"it was my father that did it." That would make my cup to run over indeed. And I will not despair of it. Why should I for one moment doubt of it? For He is a God that delighteth to make a man's cup to run over, in that way and in every other way. At the same time, while I most feelingly sympathise with Lois and Eunice in their loss of Timothy's soul to Paul, I have a creeping doubt in my conscience that, with all their excellent

Bible-reading with him, they cannot have dealt closely enough with Timothy's very mind and heart about himself. "The Holy Scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation," is the Apostle's deep, and, as I think, significantly situated, expression. I do not altogether know why it is, but I cannot get this question put to sleep in my conscience; this question: Did Lois and Eunice, after all, do all they ought to have done, to make Timothy wise unto salvation? Did they do all they ought to have done to bring home his own salvation to the very conscience and mind and heart and imagination of their little charge? I admit much, as I must, about Lois and Eunice in their training of Timothy. But, somehow, their not getting the full seal of God set on their training of Timothy, makes me doubt if, after all, they had made their training of Timothy ready for such a seal, "Wise unto *salvation*." Now, tell me, did Eunice, do you think, take her son Timothy, and show him till she made it plain to him, what it would be for her and for him to be saved, and what it would be for her and for him to be lost? And did she do that with all her tenderness and with all her lovingness? Did she see it herself, and did she show it to him, how the very tones of his little voice sometimes up and down the house, and how his little looks and actions, were the very things that salvation had been sent for? Did she show him how the holy name "Jesus" came home to their house, and spake of salvation to old and young within its walls? I may be quite wrong, and I may be doing

both Lois and Eunice a great injustice in all this But I am not without some compunction that they would have had Timothy's full salvation for their own wages if they had made it completely and convincingly clear to the thoughtful child, just what wisdom unto salvation would be in their case and in his case. At any rate, even if I am quite wrong in my reading of their case, it matters nothing to them now. Only, this disconcerting reading of their case may be blessed to make some of ourselves look somewhat more closely and conscientiously at our own case at home than we have ever yet looked at it. That is to say, are we at once clear-headed enough, and plain-spoken enough, and attracting and winning enough, with our children? Leave no suspicion, leave no doubt, in that direction undealt with, my brethren. Leave no stone unturned in seeking the salvation of your children. Go to the very root of the matter with them. Go to the very root of the word with them. Make them thoroughly to understand both the word, and the thing, salvation. Make them to see it. Make them to feel it. Make them to admit, and to confess to you, that you have now made them both see it and feel it. To see and to feel what it would be to be lost; and what it would be to be saved. And then when you have done that to the best of your ability, and with much prayer both with them and for them, there will be the less likelihood that some passer-by like Paul will come and carry off with him what would be the sweetest jewel in all

your heavenly crown. Come, my brethren, and let us be so wise unto our own salvation, and unto the salvation of our children, that we shall be able to say to our God on that day—Here am I, and all the children Thou didst give me!

CXXVI

TIMOTHY AS A YOUNG MINISTER

WE are come to-night to Timothy as a young minister. And though you are not ministers yourselves it cannot but interest you to be told how such ministers as Paul and Timothy and their true successors are made; how they make themselves; and how that self-making of theirs goes on all the time they live and labour among you.

"Till I come, give attendance to reading." This is one of Paul's outstanding exhortations to Timothy. Now if these words were addressed by an experienced minister to a new beginner in our day, something like this would be universally understood. 'Attend to your studies. Be always at your studies. Grudge every moment that is stolen from your studies. Never sit down without a book and a pen in your hand. And let it never be an ephemeral, or an impertinent, or an unproductive, book. You have not the time. You have not the money. Read nothing that is not the very best of its kind. Neither in religion, nor in letters, nor in anything else. Be like John Milton in his noble youth, be both select and industrious in your reading.'

But there is another interpretation of these words, and that on high authority too. "Reading," in Timothy's day,—so the text is sometimes interpreted,—would mean to him very much what is nowadays called expository preaching or "lecturing," as we say in Scotland. Timothy is here exhorted to read Nehemiah's autobiography and then to imitate that great reformer and his great colleagues in their exegetic and homiletic way of dealing with the law of God. The preachers of Nehemiah's day, so he tells us in his Memoirs of himself, stood upon a pulpit of wood, and read the law of God distinctly, and gave the sense, and caused the people to understand the reading. And this, many eminent exegetes assure us, is the "reading" to which Timothy is here commanded to attend. Whether that is the true interpretation of this text or no, as a matter of fact Nehemiah's method of handling Holy Scripture has been followed by all his successors in the pulpit, both in Bible times and in Church-history times. To begin with, Nehemiah's method was our Lord's method also as often as the Book was delivered to Him by the minister in the synagogue on the Sabbath day. And from the Acts we learn that this was the universal method of the Apostles also. Both the Greek and the Latin fathers followed this same Scriptural method; the expository lectures of Chrysostom and Augustine are extant to us to this day. Calvin also stood upon his pulpit of wood, and read the Word of God distinctly, and caused the people of Geneva to understand the reading.

Just as he still causes us to understand the reading as often as we consult his incomparable commentaries. And that same labour-loving and labour-rewarding method of pulpit work made the Puritans in England and the Presbyterians in Scotland the two greatest schools of preachers and people the Church of Christ has ever seen. At the same time, and while I wholly accept that official interpretation, so to call it, my heart leans to the more personal application of Chrysostom and Calvin. Those two very foremost authorities here understand Paul to counsel Timothy not so much concerning his pulpit work, as concerning his own private and personal and devotional attention to the Word of God. Calvin, above all men, had ears to hear. And that master in Israel overhears Paul saying to Timothy something like this: 'Read distinctly, and exhort convincingly, in your pulpit. But above and before all else, let the Word of God dwell richly in yourself. Even after you have known the Holy Scriptures from a child, still continue to call them constantly to mind by your systematic and assiduous reading and meditation. And by so doing thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee.' "What I owe to these two Epistles to Timothy," confesses Calvin, "can never be told."

"Rightly dividing the word of truth;" this is another of Paul's master-strokes in these masterly Epistles. And that master-stroke of the Apostle serves to set forth another of the many ad-

vantages of the consecutive and comprehensive exposition of Holy Scripture. In true expository preaching the right dividing of the whole word of truth is largely left to the Spirit of truth Himself. On no other method is it possible for any preacher to divide aright the whole consecutive and cumulative body of doctrines and duties, as well as of privileges and comforts, contained in the Holy Scriptures. There are multitudes of doctrines, and reproofs, and corrections, and instructions in righteousness, that the minister who preaches from detached and unconnected texts will never be able to divide out to his people. And even when such a preacher does come upon some of those instructions and corrections that his people need, his inconsequent method of preaching will be sure to tempt certain of his hearers to set down his words less to the wonderful perfection, and particularness, and individualisingness, of Holy Scripture than to some idiosyncracy of the preacher; or, it may be, to some personal animus of his. The preposterous charge of a personal intention and animus will not always be avoided by the best methods of pulpit-work; but the preaching that consecutively overtakes all the perfection and point of the Word of God will best meet and silence that vanity of mind, and that rebellion of heart, among our hearers. Every humble-minded hearer must often have felt and confessed the divine power with which some reproof came home to him, when it suddenly and unexpectedly leapt out upon him from the depths

of some hitherto overlooked and unexpected passage of the manifold Word of God.

Another way of rightly dividing the whole word of truth is most excellently set forth by Jeremy Taylor in one of his golden charges to his clergy: "Do not spend your sermons on general and undefined things. Do not spend your time and strength on exhortations to your people to get Christ, to be united to Christ, and things of a like unlimited and indefinite signification. But rightly divide the whole doctrine of Christ. Tell your people in every duty what are the measures, what are the circumstances, what are the instruments, and what are the particulars and minute bearings, of every general advice. For, generals not explicated, do but fill the people's heads with empty notions, and their mouths with perpetual unintelligible talk, while their hearts remain empty and themselves unedified." Yes; O wise-hearted and golden-mouthed overseer. But we would need all thy oceanic reading, and all thy capacious intellect, and all thy splendid eloquence, and all thy unceasing prayerfulness, in order to come within sight of thy great counsels. And, my brethren, with the very best of methods, how much is still left to the individual minister himself to do. What ability, what study, what courage, what wisdom, what love, is needed rightly to divide the word of truth, Sabbath after Sabbath, to all the ages, and to all the understandings, and to all the circumstances, and to all the experiences, of a listening congregation. What a sleepless, what a many-sided, what an

all-talented, what an all-experienced race of men the preachers of the Word of God would need to be!

And then if the Apostle says it once, he says it fifty times: 'Shun controversy, like the bottomless pit, in the pulpit.' Richard Baxter will surely be listened to on this subject. "Another fatal hindrance to a heavenly walk and conversation is our too frequent disputes about lesser truths. A disputatious spirit is a sure sign of an unsanctified spirit. They are usually men least acquainted with the heavenly life who are the most violent disputers about the circumstantials of religion. Yea, though you were sure that your opinions were true, yet when the chiefest of your zeal is turned to these things, the life of grace soon decays within. Let every sure truth even have but its due proportion, and I am confident that the hundredth part of our time and contention would not be spent as it is spent. I could wish you were all men of understanding and ability to defend every truth of God; but still I would have the chiefest truth to be chiefly studied, and no truth to shoulder out the thought of eternity. The least controverted points are usually the most weighty, and of most necessary and frequent use to our souls."

But as we work our way through these trenchant and pungent Epistles, what can the Apostle possibly mean by commanding a young minister of such infirm health as Timothy was to work for his pulpit and in his pastoral duties "in season and out of season"? And so commanding him, under the most tremendous imprecations; till we begin

to suspect that it was not so much Timothy's bad health, as something far worse, that Paul had in his eye all the time. Was it not because one of the besetting sins of the ministerial calling was already setting in upon the very Apostolic Church itself? It would almost seem so. "We seek apologies for our slothfulness," says one of the most unslothful of ministers. Be that as it may; let all ministers, both those who are slothfully inclined, and those who are really infirm in health, and all young ministers especially, give attendance to reading the autobiographies of two of the most infirm, but at the same time two of the most resolutely unslothful, of all our Puritan and Presbyterian ministers: the *Reliquiæ Baxterianæ*, and Thomas Boston's *Memoirs of himself*, the latter edited by a young minister of our own who is neither slothful nor infirm.

With all his ailments, and whatever they were, Timothy never touched wine, either for stimulus or for strength. Just what it was that had made Timothy such a stern total abstainer we are not told. Whether it was the self-denying example of some of the great saints of his mother's Scriptures, or the awful falls of some others of those saints, we are not told. Only, we find the aged Apostle interposing and recommending Timothy to relax his rule somewhat and to take a little wine now and then. Now I would not interfere if any old minister, or any able and devout doctor, were to say to some young minister of my acquaintance what Paul here says

to Timothy about his health and his inability for his work unless he begins to take wine. But for my part, and in our day, I would make sure that any infirm young friend of mine had tried some other expedients before he betook himself to this last expedient of all. I would do my very best to make sure that he kept early and regular hours both night and morning. And if I could get the ear of his session I would plead with them to see that their young minister took a Sabbath off every five or six Sabbaths. As also that he got a generous holiday once every summer. But above all that I would charge himself before God not to leave off his Sabbath preparation till the Saturday night. For I have seen far more woe worked in the manse and in the congregation by that last evil habit than I have seen worked even by strong drink. A real love for our books, and a real love for our pulpits, and a real love for our people, all that is far better for us ministers, and for our infirm health, than the very best of wines.

"Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an example in thy conversation." Pascal has made "the disproportion of man" a proverb in our highest literature. And Richard Baxter has made the same word a barbed arrow in the consciences of all his ministerial readers. "The disproportion," that is, between our office and our walk and conversation in our office. I suppose there is not a minister on the face of the earth who does not gnash his teeth at himself continually as he returns home again from a conversation in

which he has displayed such a disproportion to his office, and has taken such a scandal-causing part. Our young ministers may neither have Taylor, nor Baxter, nor Boston, nor any such master of ministerial deportment; but, as Behmen says, they have themselves. And if they begin early to examine themselves in this matter, and to improve upon themselves every time they cross their own doorstep, they will soon, and without books, become themselves as great examples and as great authorities as any ministerial-deportment author of them all. Let no man despise the youth and far less the age of any minister because of his disproportionate character and his disedifying conversation.

And, "take heed unto thyself," is just all that over again in other words. Take heed to thy doctrine indeed, but, first and last, take most heed to thyself. Fix thy very best and thy very closest attention on thyself. This is thy main duty as a pastor. Do not set thyself forward as a pattern to thy people. Only, make thyself a perfect pattern to them. For that minister who constantly and increasingly takes heed to himself in his walk and conversation; in preaching better and better every returning Sabbath; in discharging all the endless duties of his pastorate in season and out of season; in holding his peace in controversy; and in a life of secret faith and secret prayer; God Himself will see to it that such an apostolic minister will be imitated and celebrated both as a pattern minister and a pattern man; both before

his people, and before all his fellow-ministers. All that, by the grace of God, may be attained by any minister who sets himself to attain it, even though his book-press is as poorly furnished as Thomas Boston's book-press was so poorly furnished. At the same time, you well-to-do people, whose Christmas and New Year presses are so full of the best books, and the best of everything else, you should at this season go over all the young ministers and all the poor ministers you know, and should see to it that, with the Pastoral Epistles, they have also the best commentary, for a Scottish minister at any rate, that was ever written on those Epistles; better even than Chrysostom or Calvin; I mean Thomas Boston's *Memoirs* of himself as a parish minister. That golden book for Scottish ministers is full of things like this: "The untender carriage of some ministers in Nithsdale was very wounding to me. As also meeting with a neighbouring minister his foolish talking afforded me heavy reflections on the unedifying conversation of ministers, and my own among others, as one great cause of the unsuccess of the Gospel in our hands."

Well might Timothy, and well may every living minister to-day, lay down these two terrible Epistles, and say over them—Who is sufficient for these things? For no mere man is sufficient for such high things as these. No mortal man is sufficient for such a holy ministry as that. But then no mere and mortal man is expected to be sufficient. You must not go away and suppose that the arch-Apostle himself was sufficient for

the half of the charges he laid, almost with a curse, on Timothy. Paul, you may be sure, threw down his pen again and again in the composition of these two pastoral Epistles, and betook himself to his knees and to the blood of Christ before he could finish what he had begun to write. And these two Epistles, so full of matter for ministerial remorse, are to this day put into our hands, not to drive us to despair and self-destruction, but rather to summon us out of our beds every returning Monday morning to give better and ever better attendance to our reading of the best books, and to our writing in connection with them. To our sick-visiting in the afternoon, and to our whole walk and conversation all the day, and all the week, and every week, till a Greater than Paul comes. And, more than that, these pastoral Epistles are not written to us who are your ministers only. But all you people are to read these Epistles and are to ponder them and pray over them continually, in order that you may have it always before you at what a cost a true minister of the New Testament is made. As also to teach you to value aright such a minister when he is intrusted to you, till he shall finish his ministry among you, both by saving himself and those among you who have ears to hear him.